PARTISAN REVIEW

OCTOBER, 1948

V. S. PRITCHETT
The Future of English Fiction

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Hemingway in Italy

IRVING HOWE
Sentimental Fellow-Traveler:
F. O. Matthiessen

PAUL MATTICK
Obsessions of Berlin

ELIZABETH HARDWICK
Faulkner and the South Today

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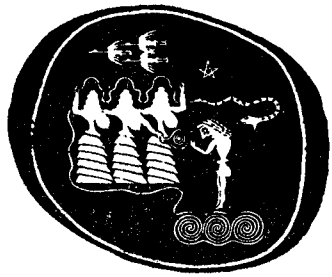

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OCTOBER, 1948 VOLUME XV, NUMBER 10

CONTENTS

FRONTISPIECE, The Three Graces in Paris, Robert Delaunay

THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH FICTION, V. S. Pritchett 1063

SULLIVAN'S INTERPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY, Lester Hawkins 1071

THE HIGH-HEELED SHOES, Hisaye Yamamoto 1079

HEMINGWAY IN ITALY, Mario Praz 1086

THE TESTAMENT OF PERPETUAL CHANGE, William Carlos Williams 1101

TOBIAS' PRAYER, William Gibson 1102

THE USEFUL LIFE OF A DEAD MAN, Renzo Rava 1103

OBSESSIONS OF BERLIN, Paul Mattick 1108

THE SENTIMENTAL FELLOW-TRAVELING OF F. O. MATTHIESSEN, Irving Howe 1125

REVIEWS

FAULKNER AND THE SOUTH TODAY, Elizabeth Hardwick 1130

RAW GENIUS, SELF-DELUSION, AND INCANTATION Delmore Schwartz 1135

ADJUSTING HAMLET, F. W. Dupee 1136

THE ART OF THE FILM, Robert Warshow 1139

VARIETY

ALBERT CAMUS AND MODERATION, Nicola Chiaromonte 1142

CORRESPONDENCE 1146

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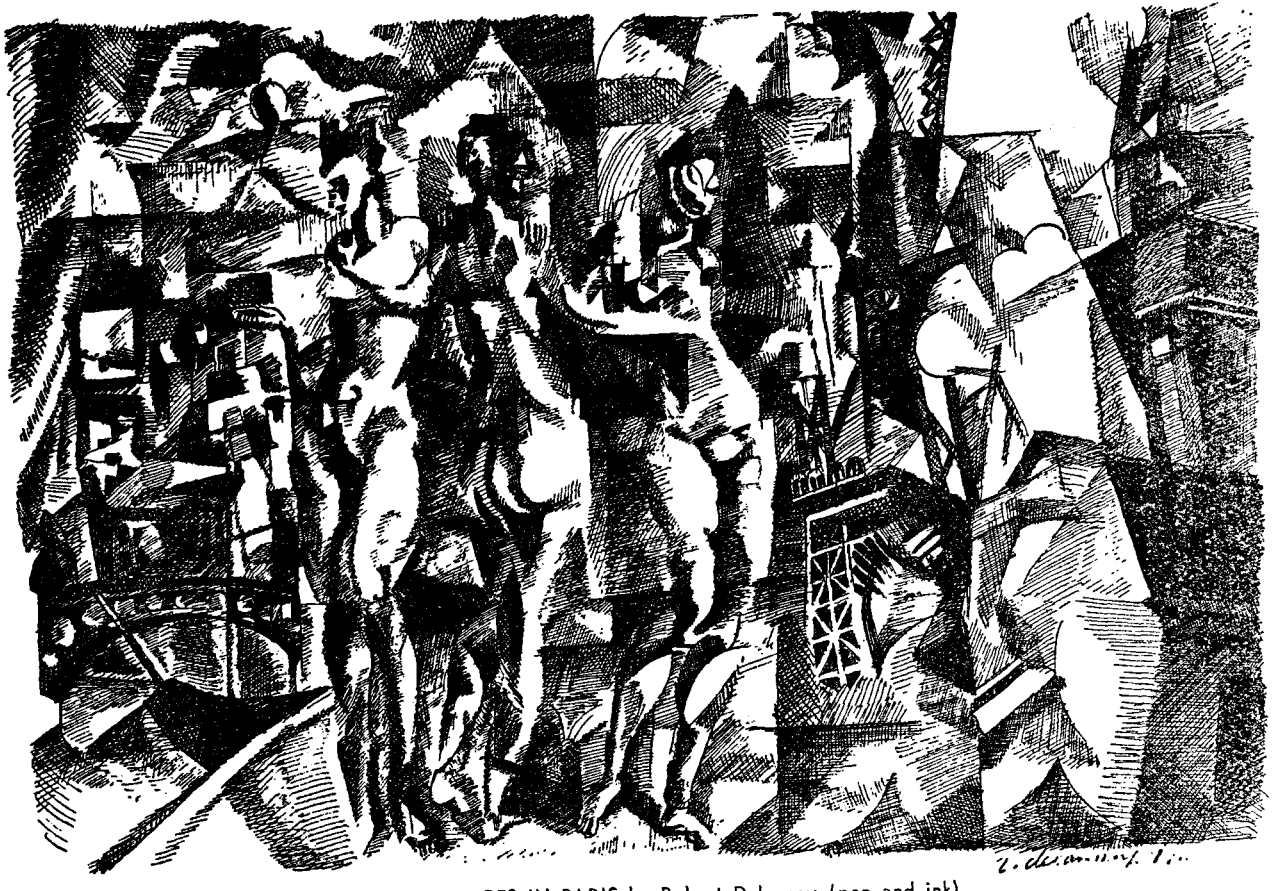

THE THREE GRACES IN PARIS by Robert Delaunay (pen and ink)

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V. S. Pritchett

THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH FICTION

After their long silence it is natural to wonder what is going on in the minds of the English novelists. Has another Proust, cunningly insulated from total war, been secretly writing all the time? There was said to be a crisis in the condition of the novel: in the eight paralyzed years since Munich has that crisis been surmounted in the course of idleness by unconscious cerebration? Was the war our psycho-analyst upon whom we successfully transferred the novel's neurosis? Or do we take up the pen again to be faced by the old difficulty? What we have meant to convey during the last twenty-five years by the words 'the future of the novel,' was our doubt whether the novel had any future at all; a doubt that first arose when *Ulysses* looked like the novel to end all novels, when the first long narrative films succeeded and the monopoly of the novel came to an end; but above all when our most talented novelists retired into the private gardens of their sensibility and left the world outside to their inferiors. Since *Sons and Lovers* and *A Passage to India,* have there been any English novels of the highest rank? A quarter of a century has passed since these two books were written.

It is doubtful whether a novelist is the best investigator of these questions. For him 'the novel' is the novels he has not written; and a guess at the future of the novel will mean for him, the novels he thinks someone else ought to write: *he* intends otherwise. The views of a novelist are hardly more than the steam rising from a simmering pot. Or more precisely, they are arguments with his own conscience and imagination, clues to his own conflicts. Very well he knows that themes, tendencies, methods cannot be imposed. Very doubtfully may they even be self-imposed; any novel he may write rises from the contention within. If he asks for a less esoteric sensibility and for a range altogether wider in the novel, it is because

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he is dissatisfied with himself and is not equipped to be very much more. The novelist is what he is.

Still, certain things are obvious.

Talent abounds; the highest talent. If we take any half dozen distinguished novelists under fifty we must admire their feeling, their brains, their writing, their diverse and original skills. They know how to write. They never exceed their knowledge. They make no gross errors. For them the novel is an art and they practice it with fidelity. How rarely one is bored by the best modern novels; how often, in the past, have 'the great' bored us, how awkwardly distended by errors they have been. If only, we say, we could combine all the skill of the modern novelist in one outstanding imagination, if only we could roll any half dozen of our novelists into one. If only—and there lies the undefined mystery of our dissatisfaction. It may be that these distinguished novelists are much more than distinguished; perhaps they, and all contemporary literature, are hopelessly overshadowed by the events of the last ten years. Life may not only have afflicted the creative with its excesses; life may have dulled the ear of criticism also.

If this is not so we can fall back upon the now hackneyed explanations of the lack of 'great novels'; the breakdown of our civilization; the enfeeblement of upper middle class culture; the fact that two wars have robbed two generations of their maturity; the fact that life has behaved exorbitantly. Every writer (I believe Mr. Desmond MacCarthy once said), has to decide the amount of life he will live: it is possible for writers to live too much; and, in one sense, the compressed concentration on skill, intelligence and sensibility suggests the unmanageable pressure of public life upon the writer's mind which, to some extent, must always run counter to the open direction of the world. Our half dozen writers stand on the dwindling ground of private life. There is also a not unimportant mechanical consideration. An uncontrollable amount of visual and oral experience is dispatched by screen and radio directly to the audience without ceremony, experience which was once the monopoly of the novelist; and he finds himself in a position similar to the painters' when photography was invented. Here the dilemma of the novelist is painful; he is on the flood-tide of a popular movement, a class revolution which offers new subjects and even new language; one which may

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conceivably heal the split in our culture. But he finds that the cinema and the radio sweep away his advantage the moment he attains it. This is an age of the senses, not of the mind; an age made for the reporter, not for the imagination.

The novelist is also bound to reflect in dismay that the modern novel is only two hundred years old. It is the youngest literary form, far younger, for example, than the drama. The novel was born with modern capitalism, it is saturated with individualism and liberal culture; it is characteristically middle class. Is the novel tied to the fate of capitalism and the liberal view of life? Is the novel condemned quietly to become an anomaly in the socialist climate where freedom, individualism, liberal thought and the preoccupation with individual fate are despised, discouraged or, worse still, are painlessly forgotten? When we think of the future of the novel, we are inquiring whether it is the form which will continue to attract the best creative minds; and it may be that the intellectual atmosphere of the collective state will be kinder to other forms of writing. Under socialism, the sociable art may wane; just as, since the flowering of sociability, epics like *Paradise Lost,* compendious narratives like *The Canterbury Tales* and sagas like *Beowulf,* are no longer written. Official myths may come to mean more to us than private histories, and this condition—as Greek literature shows us—is above all congenial to the drama. It may very well be that 'official' art—in this sense—will be superior to the private or unofficial art of the novelist, and already the cinema has shown the capacity—crude though it is—to create myths and 'heroes of our time'—a capacity which the novel has lost. When we say there are too many novels we mean that so many different views of life become in the end gratuitous and self-destructive; and we would like to return to a form of art which, working under more stimulating restrictions, would speak with the single voice of a classical authority.

Still, though we allow our pessimism to make this kind of bed, we novelists are not obliged to lie on it. After all the novel *is* a young form and its strength lies in its adaptability. Private life dwindles: for long, ever since D. H. Lawrence, indeed ever since Wells's *The New Machiavelli,* the interest in character for its own sake has gone. Lives, states of mind, states of soul, collective feeling have replaced the concern with the friction of character in its own circle. Sensibility

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itself has dissolved character of the traditional kind. The people in Miss Compton Burnett's novels move like the featureless hierophants of some tortuous ceremony. The chief character is no longer the hero, the heroine or the villain but, in a large number of novels, is really an impersonal shadow, a presence that we may call 'the contemporary situation.' Without knowing it, often by responding with his private sensibility only, the novelist has slipped into the role of unofficial historian. He has become the historian of the crisis in civilization, whether he write politically (as Koestler has done), as a religious man like Graham Greene or with the obliquity of those dispossessed poets, Henry Green and Miss Elizabeth Bowen. This strange new personage has taken possession of the novel as a mist takes possession of the streets and all who breathe it are transformed and, I think, are also diminished. When we regret that there are no 'great characters' in the modern novel, people like Squire Western, Lovelace, Micawber, Sir Willoughby Patterne or Lord Jim, the reply must be that 'the contemporary situation' has brought them all to a single level.

In making this judgment, we must record the losses of the novel, but we need not go deeply into them. From the point of life, range has been lost; from the point of religion or ethics, spiritual and moral conflict have been lost—we analyze and endure, we do not choose and act—from the point of view of morals or politics, purpose has been lost. We sum up the case against ourselves by saying that the novel has become a diversified autobiography. The 'I', whether he is the reporter, the camera man, the sensibility, the split self of our time, dominates these books. The 'they' of the Victorians—even the 'they' of Wells, Bennett, Conrad and the Lawrence of the mining stories, has receded. Nor need we go far into the gains: the elision of false scenery, explanatory essays, useless sub-plots, tendentious and literary dialogue, and the great gain in narrative and psychological alacrity. Loss of substance, gain of means, must still (I think) be the general judgment on the condition of the contemporary novel. The war-time novels have followed Hemingway-ese—the false tough or fake poker faced—to the point of self parody.

The heart of the problem for the modern novelist is that he has had a glut of new means, new manners, new styles; he has been poor in material or passive in his use of it. He looks no subject full

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in the face and he has accordingly been distracted by the outskirts of it. To his enormous credit the modern English novelist—writers like Isherwood, Elizabeth Bowen and Graham Greene—have conserved the human fragments in an iron age when human lives, what I feel and you feel, are considered to be shameful. Human beings are simply archaic, ivy-covered ruins, preserved by the connoisseur, and they stand out oddly in the new world of the masses. They are seen in a twilight.

And yet, under the new dispensation, is it true? *Are* human beings in fact so isolated, so free of responsibility, so passive before fate? Is their environment merely the dwindling ground they stand on? Obviously not. Before the war the young novelist's stock remedy was Marxism and social realism. We were due for a working-class novel, a political novel, a novel reconstituted by renewed contact with society. It must be said that Marxism has inspired no novels of the first class—at a guess, I would say, Marxism is more likely to inspire drama—nor have there even been any English novels about social justice or economic conditions, or even novels of plain reporting, which arouse much interest. The decadent bourgeois formalist with his passion for psychology has had all the talent. Realism—ideological and literary—has been hardly more than pedestrian. I take it that Marxist theory was too black and white for the English scene. Marxism and social realism have certainly produced no novels of the first order in Russia either; and, to be just, one is not sure whether this is due to the lack of amenity and excess of dynamic in the doctrine or a lack of freedom and security in which to consider it. The valuable work of Marxism has been in literary criticism where it has traced literature back to one of its sources in social life; and perhaps, if Marxism could be disentangled from the miserable manœuvres of party politics, and be prevented from the cheerless habit of hanging itself in the loops of the party line it might inspire the novelist. But one must doubt whether straight doctrine of any kind ever moved the imagination, which indeed thrives rather on mixtures. *Paradise Lost* was not written by a straight Cromwellian Puritan. The real political subject of the last fifteen years has not been the clash of beliefs, but the vacillations and disillusions accompanying the wish to believe.

Another remedy offered to the novelist was the return to the Christian tradition, the revival of the frame of original sin, the beauties

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of irrationalism; or a return to 'values,' though the conditions which produced them, the conditions of stability above all, are lacking. And it must be said that the brilliant school of Catholic pessimists and converts has brought new material to the novel. The soul—one of the repressed subjects of a rational period—has the attraction of the repressed. Original sin has replaced sex as the exquisitely forbidden fruit; and the pleasure of showing how good are the souls of bad men has been exploited with brilliance. In their badness lies the soil of faith: a bad Catholic is better than a good non-Catholic. The Catholic novelist has the great advantage of writing against the current of his time.

But against them must be put the fact that the Catholics are all converts; they write with Protestant zeal and the Calvinist zest for damnation. Like the Marxists, they are totalitarians and totalitarians do not value individual human life. Not for long. Never when we come to the precise test. Like the Marxists, like the sceptics of our generation, they are specialists. There is no conflict. There is the medicinal application of doctrine to life. The result is that although the religious approach has added new material to the novel, new material that is handled with all the advantage of the long, flexible western tradition of Catholic culture, it is still specialized. The range is still narrow. Life has gone into hospital: the smell of ether, the smell of the surgery, the unpitying point of the surgeon's knife, are suggested by these brilliant misanthropists, who would persuade us that we all urgently need an operation.

In their general terms, these two movements, the religious and the political, have done a service to the novelist. They have reawakened his interest in ordinary people, they have interested him in the present melting of classes—in which a new class, the upper-working or lower middle-class are coming to power, as interestingly as Balzac's manufacturers—they are restoring the sense of environment. But they touch only the fringe of their two subjects, the side to which their doctrine exclusively directs them. Money and religion: yes, those are the two repressed subjects in the modern novel upon which furtively we open the door, two matters so closely entwined in human life that in observing the lives of ordinary people we can never escape them. Not only that: their aspect changes in every generation, as certainly as the fashion of love. How far we have moved,

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under the still continued influence of the Romantic movement, from the eighteenth century's preoccupation with self-interest, so despised by the sensibility, and yet ubiquitous. So persistent that who can doubt in a vulgar society such as ours, a society of the common people, that it has the interest of a major passion. There exists at present a kind of mystique of the plain, the ordinary, of all that we mean by the sound, human feeling of 'the people'; it is dangerous and insensitive to fail to observe the other side of this mystique. The movement dominated by the word 'people' has a strong Puritan derivation: the inseparable companion, the unholy whisper at its elbow, is the picaro or rogue.

The failure to write about money, in our generation, has its roots, I believe, in the reaction against the Protestant outlook on life, for Protestantism is not totalitarian. Its vitality has lain in its readiness to break up into new forms; and, in England, its spirit has, paradoxically, done much to create 'the people' movement. Condemned by its intimate association with individualism and capitalism, its hatred of the medieval outlook, its repugnance to anonymity, the Protestant attitude has enormously in its favor the belief in the necessity of virtue and good conduct. There is no salvation through sin. There is salvation only in virtue and restraint. The Protestant lives on earth. This religious attitude is now profoundly part of English character; and in ignoring the consequences of it, the novelist ignores important elements in psychology, for religion intones the fundamental human responses. One example may be taken from a Victorian novel, simply to show what the modern novelist has totally neglected: I mean the quite common wish to be good. In psychological terms one would say that the novelist has ostracized the super-ego. The example comes from *Felix Holt* and George Eliot was the novelist of the super-ego above all. Here one sees the mischievous and agreeable Esther Lyon sitting beside the harsh and doctrinaire young Radical at one of his meetings—meetings so topical and disturbing to mid-Victorians, so boring, it must be confessed, to us—and, at the sight of his handsome face, she is perturbed, not by the so improbably direct sexual desire our contemporaries immediately imagine; but by the longing 'to be better.' We need not suppose that longing takes this precise form nowadays when a nice girl sits next to a handsome one-track communist, or any other young man with an overmastering idea in his

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head, but the idea of self-elevation is a permanently recurring episode in love, and is fertile in social consequences. In our own time, so far have we removed from the close observation of environment, we are inclined to take too primitive a view of human conduct and society. The truth is that the primitive and the civilized have settled down to living side by side.

I am not suggesting a crop of pious novels. I am suggesting that what in its broadest sense can be called the Protestant environment, has been neglected by the satirical and the serious. For the novelist, the mad religions are as fruitful as the serious ones. I am suggesting a world with which the novelist can do as he likes. A second suggestion grows out of this: it has already stimulated some of the work of Rex Warner, though he has not infused his subjects with the juice of human life. There might well be a return to the unromantic, unpicturesque rendering of the great characters who are really great moral types: to the hypocrite, the miser, the envious man, the tyrant, the sycophant, the sadist, the virtuous man, the lazy man. Ben Johnson, Bunyan, Molière and (half-way towards ourselves) Balzac show the way. Above all, the moralized figures of the Russian novel, characters like Prince Myshkin, the superb Indushka of *The Golovlyov Family,* or the sublime Oblomov. The novelist who is imbued with the idea of the virtue and imagination of 'the people,' ought to seek to create myths which the cinema has—so crudely—already succeeded in creating, without benefit of moral reflection; in these moral types, whom all recognize, upon whom all brood, he might find matter which is not repugnant to the intellect and which is delightful to the general imagination. They are the necessary demi-gods, the humanized ideas, which a new humanism will have to create if it is to survive aesthetically. Our world is not likely to be satisfied for much longer with the picaresque novel, which has become popular in the present period of chaos. If our world survives at all, the craving for these moral figures, these moralities, will impose itself, I believe, upon the novelist. The experience of war, whatever else it is on the surface, has deposited in millions of men deprived of any other intellectual resource a simple rudimentary moral interest in the types among whom they have lived. For man is sustained by the sight of his fellows and, in these years, has often been sustained by nothing else.

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Lester Hawkins

SULLIVAN'S INTERPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Starting with the empirical methods and insights of American pragmatism, Harry Stack Sullivan has formulated an *interpersonal* psychology which studies the human being directly in the context of his present relations. According to Sullivan our health or our illness lies in the manner of our communication of ourselves to significant others. Our personalities can never be isolated from the complex of these interpersonal situations in which we have our being, and the cure of our approach to others is the cure of ourselves. It becomes readily apparent that Sullivan's method is a radical shift from psychology as a science of symptoms allied to medicine (presupposing virtually *a priori* definitions of the nature of instinctual drives) to the study of the human being as an acting totality in his present relations and with his present culture.

Sullivan was already known in the late twenties as a brilliant practitioner with schizophrenics, but, by personal accounts, he had no patience for writing out his theories. Even now, his notions can be pieced together only from a few scattered articles in *Psychiatry* and a series of brief lectures given in 1946.* It is not surprising that his work remains comparatively unknown in intellectual circles though its effect has been revolutionary among the more advanced analysts. Here I can only sketch a few of the basic concepts of his complex system.

To arrive at its formulations, Sullivan's method works a constant shift from our present relations to the interpersonal conditioning of our past. In the various interpersonal situations the person has lived through he has developed a basic self, a self which admits certain

* These lectures were published as *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry*, Washington, 1946. See also articles by other members of the Washington School of Psychiatry, especially those on schizophrenia.

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actions into consciousness but not others. Sullivan posits a social definition of this self in the manner of George Herbert Mead; it is an "I-me" relation whose self-awareness depends upon its communication with others, its action with and responses to the specific, detailed, unique persons who have been significant to it. The self is the conscious "I" part of the total personality with a security system for its protection and anxiety as its boundary.

The security system and, hence, the nature of the self is formed by the specific order of derogation and encouragement the person has received in his conditioning. The self-dynamism works continually to unify the self, to ward off and avoid what derogation it can, to avoid anxiety and to grow and express itself in a complex of human factors which are not always encouraging. If it becomes necessary to perform an action that conflicts with the security system the result will be anxiety and the action together with its purpose may be completely cast out of awareness or *dissociated* from the self.

The husband who meets his wife's derogatory remark first with anxiety, then with headaches, and who may then use the headache in any number of subtle ways to discomfit her, and may rationalize it as a hangover, is a simple example of a type of self in operation. That his wife's remark was aimed at his taste in novels, a sensitive area, and that a headache was the result instead of a defense of his enthusiasm, a reference to her fondness for Dashiell Hammett, a show of contempt or a loud sputter, are matters that can only be uncovered by a reference to the past. Again, that the husband will insist his wife is an angel who adores him and all his tastes, only further complicates our comparatively simple example. In this instance, we see that a taste in novels is in none of its ramifications an objective affair, but is, on the contrary, a highly subjective and interpersonal issue.

The mode of behavior in present situations is, then, largely determined not by the demand and the peculiar nature of these others now acting, but by past experience in altogether different contexts. To account for this continuing discrepancy between present and past, Sullivan developed one of his key concepts—that of *parataxis*. This term literally means side-by-side as opposed to the logical flow implied in the word "syntax." The description was first applied when the analyst saw two distinct me-you relations developing between a patient and himself; the first of these was, of course, the existing situa-

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tion, but, especially when anxiety was aroused, a number of actions were also observed which made no sense in the present context. The patient would suddenly get tired, a seemingly harmless statement would cause him to stammer, or he would scowl in indignation while saying nothing to convey his anger. It was later discovered that the patient was living an imaginary relation with its roots in the past, or re-living an earlier, unresolved integration. This separation of the paratactic relation from the syntactic is a basic approach in Sullivan's analysis; it also explains what is perhaps the most basic difficulty in our relations.

Statements, gestures and other communicative devices used out of context in present situations nearly always refer in this manner to past relations. Carrying this idea somewhat further, Dr. Leslie Farber has posited that we each have a highly individual language which may be depressive, disparaging, haughty or whatever in character, depending upon the strongest trends in our conditioning. To know a person and his language, then, is to know his whole approach with its anxiety areas, dissociated patterns, methods of derogating (often extremely subtle), peculiar demands—in short, the entirety of a specific individual who is at once more unique, more differentiated and more unified than any set of generalized symptoms based on assumed instinctual drives would ever lead us to suppose.

The drive toward unity of self is called by Sullivan the self-dynamism; it is the observable tendency of the self to unify a welter of praise and blame in its experience with unique individuals into a whole—to organize itself around a center of self-esteem which allows for the full communication of its aims and desires. As in a good novel or play, to know a person is to know at once the great variety of detail he presents and its organization into a recognizably individual oneness of being.

II

We are made ill by *derogation*. This simple term takes on considerable depth of meaning when applied to the workings of the communicative process; it indicates every manner of human power-device which breaks off a communication between freely acting and responsible selves. It is always some form of derogation— often very

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subtle and difficult to detect—which drives us to protect ourselves, to develop anxiety and dissociations, to form perhaps a low opinion of ourselves and to show unnecessary malice to others. The self, anxious to grow and communicate, tries to avoid the derogation it meets, to throw it out of consciousness or ignore it; but if the hatred and belittlement were persistent and came from a significant other, it can be taken over and become part of the "I-me" relation. Thwarted in this way, the self still tries to grow by dissociating the derogated part of the personality, by fighting back at the author of the derogation however it can, or by substituting—developing prestige in a free area to offset the stunted part. The derogation inflicted upon us in childhood may be later forgotten, but if it is severe and unresolved it will remain in parataxes, dissociations, low self-esteem, and malice. The analyst must use every means to discover precisely how the personality was originally derogated to develop this specific "language" in reply. (This is actually extremely difficult, since severe anxiety is aroused in the process.)

Sullivan has noted, without explanation, that the self which is derogated also derogates others. I think it can be said that there is here a carry-over by which others continue to be viewed as the agents of frustration. Anxiety and dissociations with their attendant physical symptoms are partly inner movements of conflict between judgments a self feels impelled to impose on itself but which it rebels against because they are not its own. The operations of power are inevitably mysterious. We continue to subject ourselves to derogation because we do not know *how* it has operated, because of the subtlety or the remoteness in experience, or on account of the veil of love and tenderness that is thrown over so many human power drives and hates.

III

Already it can be seen that a study of interpersonal contexts is highly complex and that, viewed in the generality, the character of human relations is almost infinitely various. While this makes the formulation of concepts difficult, it is the basic strength of Sullivan's approach. Sullivan is best when he is describing detailed and specific analyses; he is less enlightening when he tries to classify the basic trends of his observations into "syndromes." Precisely what is impor-

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tant in his method are the techniques for discovering exact and unique interpersonal devices in the present and the exact and unique determinants of them in the past.

In Sullivan's analysis, the psychiatrist must expertly uncover the processes at work in his patient's relations *with others*—not with him. Sullivan has developed a very elaborate system of techniques for unveiling entire interpersonal contexts, for obtaining information about parataxes and dissociations, and for disclosing anxiety-areas without at the same time increasing anxiety to the unbearable point. To a certain extent, the analyst enters into relations with the patient and uses this relation directly to discover whatever he can; but there is no transference in the Freudian sense. The analyst must guide the patient to a new view which will illuminate the derogation of the past and thereby increase his self-esteem to allow dissociated action to be again associated to the conscious "I"-self. To do this, ill action on both sides of the present relation must also be clarified. The results of analysis are a full knowledge of one's interpersonal actions with a self that allows this responsibility and, accordingly, is free to communicate its desires and aims in their deepest sense.

Sullivan's descriptions of psychoses are also a mixture of simplicity and complexity—simple in that all, except for organic types, spring from disastrous interpersonal approaches, which are complex, however, in their infinite variety. There may be, for example, a schizophrenia which is heavily paranoid, but there may also be an even more severe paranoia, which, because it is successful in resisting the hatred with which it believes itself surrounded, may be virtually free of schizophrenia.

Schizophrenia generally follows upon a *panic,* caused by the acute failure of the associative power of the self and by the unforeseen failure of some interpersonal approach that had been completely trusted and which was vital for safety. The basic symptoms of the schizophrenic are extremely low self-esteem, dissociations so numerous that they fragment the self, paranoid fears (the results of long subjection to derogation), and hallucinations ("voices"). The patient becomes engaged in magical operations in an attempt to protect himself. In the course of his extended efforts to communicate with schizophrenics, Sullivan found that their language contained a very definite logic of its own, that of a harried defense. Our ordinary

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speech is meaningful because at basis it aims at satisfactions; the schizophrenic does not seek satisfactions because he is absolutely convinced that there are none.*

Sometimes the schizophrenic, especially the more active type, hits upon a paranoid systematization. Once this occurs, and the whole of the distress is viewed as a conspiracy of others, the patient changes his activity from perplexed anxiety and defense into one of suppressing all doubt-provoking instances which might interfere with the plausibility of his "explanation." The paranoid systematization relieves the patient of a tremendous weight of derogatory judgment and is so markedly beneficial to his peace of mind that it is seldom relinquished. If the paranoid systematization does not set in, the schizophrenic passes from bewildered catatonia into hebephrenic dilapidation.

IV

Sullivan's system presents itself, thus, as a remarkable body of knowledge that far transcends its behavioral basis** and is rich in suggestions of both psychological and philosophical importance. Its chief merit is its consideration of human beings in the fullness of their cultural detail; his theories do not reduce and they do not rest on bland assumptions of original instincts or an imaginary anthropology—we cannot know our origins and perhaps it would make little difference if we could. His theories also stress the value of the communication of ourselves and of understanding the unique natures of those who surround us. Sullivan himself seems unaware of either the philosophic importance or the true nature of this communication, tending to assume that an integration into a liberal America is the

* See *Language and Schizophrenia,* (1947). Sullivan's unfortunately brief contribution to this symposium seems to indicate that the "concrete" nature of schizophrenic thinking is not due to an inability to form abstractions, as in Gelb, Goldstein, and Kasanin's theory, but to the breaking of the communicative context in which abstractions are "safe" and useful.

** Sullivan correctly points to the "objective," observable nature of his concepts as distinguishing them from earlier psychoanalytic theory. But aside from the difficulty of any direct behavioral placement of such notions as parataxic or "eidetic" persons persisting in the self-system, it is to be noted that the distinctive feature of Sullivan's insistence upon behavior is, or has come to be, not its observable nature, but the *order* of fact it brings up—the interpersonal character of the self.

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final end of our cures. But the groundwork he has laid is full of ethical connotations that go far beyond this adjustment fallacy.

A psychology of the total self brings up countless questions which ultimately transcend the range of that psychology. A few of these are: the nature of a commitment to oneself (his self-awareness, responsibility, self-esteem) and to his situation (involving, as it does, some absolutizing of one's choices); the place of one's projects as determinants of his commitment and, to some extent, of his view of the world; the discovery and maintenance of an identity of self despite a multiplicity of evidence which cannot be added up to this identity or which may even be of a contradictory nature; the nature of an anxiety which cannot logically be always ill anxiety but must also be a motive-force for the unification of self and for its communication; the role of others as determinants of, or occasions for, one's activity and identity (what one *is, has* and *does* with them).

As can be seen, a psychology of the total self becomes much more intimately bound to moral philosophy and to philosophy proper than the psychology which sprang from and maintained the basic practices of medical science. As a moral philosophy, the psychology itself formulates grounds for action and commitment which become, in turn, values of ethical significance. (As an example, psychological formulae—"inferiority," "castration complex," "sublimation,"—are in fact widely used at the present time to explain our relations and to provide the incentive for certain orders of action within them.) This being the case, the most we can ask is that the practice of psychiatry be in the nature of a communication which attempts to show the workings of our commitments without making absolute judgments on their factual content. The tie with critical philosophy comes with the formulation of assumptions of the nature of consciousness, of the substantive continuant known as the self, of an hypothesis that a certain kind of world (*e.g.* the schizophrenic's or manic-depressive's world) is given with certain kinds of action. It is apparent that logical descriptions are necessary here, if not a metaphysical basis, for the assumption of identities.

Some of these questions have been dealt with by French and German phenomenologists and existentialists. They, however, tend to construct largely *a priori* systems on the basis of formal propositions about the nature of existence. I believe that in coming to these ques-

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tions with a pragmatic and empirical background, we are in a somewhat better position than they, with their phenomenological training, to find the pertinent answers. Sullivan is here a case in point; his observations of interpersonal behavior, made under optimum conditions for impartiality, are examples of what our science can do to save us from the kind of talk that is often very close to nonsense in Sartre about an existential, *a priori* psychoanalysis.*

The new questions raised by our psychoanalysis (I refer to Sullivan and Kardiner specifically) can, I believe, issue in a new *grounding* for our pragmatism, a grounding which can establish what a pragmatism for a human being and *his* world (in Kant's sense of the world *for* man, the citizen *of* the world) can be.

* From the above criticism of the existentialists I would exempt Jaspers who stresses the value of scientific and empirical investigation but supplements it with a view of the human being as possible existence which allows for the construction of a world that is something beyond the bare everything-that-is of the naturalist but is largely free from the sentimentalism of the religious personalist.

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Hisaye Yamamoto

THE HIGH-HEELED SHOES

In the middle of the morning, the telephone rings. I am the only one at home. I answer it. A man's voice says softly, "Hello, this is Tony."

I don't know anybody named Tony. Nobody else in the house has spoken of knowing any Tony. But the greeting is very warm. It implies, "There is a certain thing which you and I alone know." Evidently he has dialed a wrong number. I tell him so, "You must have the wrong number," and prepare to hang up as soon as I know that he understands.

But the man says this is just the number he wants. To prove it, he recites off the pseudonym by which this household, Garbo-like, goes in the directory, the address, and the phone number. It is a unique name and I know there is probably no such person in the world. I merely tell him a fragment of the truth, that there is no such person at the address, and I am ready to hang up again.

But the man stalls. If there is no such person available, it appears he is willing to talk to me, whoever I am. I am suddenly in a bad humor, suspecting a trap in which I shall be imprisoned uncomfortably by words, words, words, earnestly begging me to try some product or another, the like of which is unknown anywhere else in the world. It isn't that I don't appreciate the unrapturous life a salesman must often lead. And I like to buy things. If I had the money, I would buy a little from every salesman who comes along, after I had permitted him to run ably or ineptly (it doesn't really matter) through the words he has been coached to repeat. Then, not only in the pride of the new acquisition, but in the knowledge that he was temporarily encouraged, my own spirits would gently rise, lifted by the wings of the dove. At each week's end, surrounded knee-deep

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by my various purchases—the Fuller toothbrush, the receipt for the magazine subscription which will help a girl obtain a nine-week flying course which she eagerly, eagerly wants, the one dozen white eggs fresh from the farm and cheaper than you can get at the corner grocery, the first volume in the indispensable 12-volume Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Home Medicine, the drug sundries totalling at least two dollars which will help guarantee a youngish veteran a permanent job—I could sigh and beam. That would be nice. But I don't have the money, and this coming of ill temper is just as much directed at myself for not having it as it is at the man for probably intending to put me in a position where I shall have to make him a failure.

"And just what is it you want?" I ask impatiently.

The man tells me, as man to woman. In the stark phrasing of his urgent need, I see that the certain thing alluded to by the warmth of his voice is a secret not of the past, but, with my acquiescence, of the near future. I let the receiver take a plunge down onto the hook from approximately a one-foot height. Then, I go outside and pick some pansies for Margarita, as I had been intending to do just before the phone rang. Margarita is the seven-year-old girl next door. She has never known any mother or father, only *tias* and *tios* who share none of her blood. She has a face that looks as if it had been chiseled with utter care out of cream and pale pink marble. Her soft brown hair hangs in plaits as low as her waist. And, these days, because the Catholic school is full and cannot take her, she wanders lonesomely about, with plenty of time for such amenities as dropping in to admire a neighbor's flowers. The pansies I pick for her, lemon yellow, deep purple, clear violet, mottled brown, were transplanted here last year by Wakako and Chester, a young couple we know who have a knack for getting things wholesale, and they are thriving like crazy this Spring, sprawling untidily over their narrow bed and giving no end of blooms.

Later, there is a small, timid rat-tat-tat at the door. It's Margarita, bearing two calla lilies, a couple of clove pinks, and one tall amaryllis stalk with three brilliant brick-red flowers and a bud. She dashes off the porch, down the steps, and around the ivy-sprawled front fence before I can properly thank her. Oh, well. Taking the gift to the service porch, I throw out the wilting brown-edged callas she dashed over with last week, rinse out the blue potato glass, fill it with

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water, and stick in the new bouquet. But all the time the hands are occupied with these tokens of arrived Spring and knowing Margarita, the mind recalls unlovely, furtive things.

When Mary lived with us, there was a time she left for work in the dark hours of the morning. On one of these mornings, about midway in her lonely walk past the cemetery to the P-car stop, a man came from behind and grabbed her, stopped her mouth with his hand, and, rather arbitrarily, gave her a choice between one kiss and rape. Terrified, she indicated what seemed to be the somewhat lesser requirement. He allowed her to go afterwards, warning her on no account to scream for help or look back, on penalty of death. When she arrived at her place of work, trembling and pale green, her office friends asked whether she was ill, and she told them of her encounter. They advised her to go to the police immediately.

She doubted whether that would help, since she had been unable to see the man. But, persuaded that a report, even incomplete, to the police was her duty to the rest of womankind, she reluctantly went to the nearest station with her story. She came back with the impression that the police had been much amused, that they had actually snickered as she left with their officially regretful shrug over her having given them nothing to go on. She told her boss and he called the police himself and evidently made his influence felt, for we had a caller that evening.

It was I who answered the knock. A policeman stepped in, and, without any preliminaries, asked, "Are you the girl that was raped?"

Making up with enough asperity for a sudden inexplicable lack of aplomb, I said, no, and no one had been raped, *yet,* and called Mary. She and the officer went out on the porch and talked in near whispers for a while. After he left, Mary identified him and his companion as the night patrol for our section of the city. He had promised that they would tell the dawn patrol to be hovering around about the time she left for work each morning. But Mary, nervously trying the dim walk a couple of more times, caught no sign of any kind of patrol. Thereafter, she and the rest of the women of the household took to traveling in style, by taxi, when they were called on to go forth at odd hours. This not only dented our budgets, but made us considerably limit our unescorted evening gadding.

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There were similar episodes, fortunately more fleeting. What stayed with me longer than Mary's because it was mine, was the high-heeled shoes. Walking one bright Saturday morning to work along the same stretch that Mary had walked, I noticed a dusty blue, middle-aged sedan parked just ahead. A pair of bare, not especially remarkable legs was crossed in the open doorway, as though the body to them were lying on the front seat, relaxing. I presumed they were a woman's legs, belonging to the wife of some man who had business in the lumberyard just opposite, because they were wearing black high-heeled shoes. As I passed, I glanced at the waiting woman.

My presumption had been rash. It wasn't a woman, but a man, unclothed (except for *the high-heeled shoes, the high-heeled shoes*), and I saw that I was, with frantic gestures, being enjoined to linger awhile. Nothing in my life before had quite prepared for this: some Freud, a smattering of Ellis, lots of Stekel, and fat Krafft-Ebing, in red covers, were on my bookshelves, granted; conversation had explored curiously, and the imagination conjured bizarre scenes at the drop of a casual word. But reading is reading, talking is talking, thinking is thinking, and living is different. Improvising hastily on behavior for the occasion, I chose to pretend as though my heart were repeating Pippa's song, and continued walking, possibly a little faster and a little straighter than I had been, up to the P-car stop. When I got to the printshop, the boss said, "You look rather put upon this morning." I mustered up a feeble smile and nodded, but I couldn't bring myself to speak of the high-heeled shoes. This was nothing so uncomplicated as pure rape, I knew, and the need of the moment was to go away by myself, far from everybody, and think about things for awhile. But there were galleys and page proofs waiting to be read, and I set to with a sort of dedicated vengeance, for I had recently been reprimanded for getting sloppy again. When the hectic morning of poring over small print was over and my elbows black, letting my thoughts go cautiously but wholly back to the time between leaving the house and boarding the P-car, I found there was not much to think about. I had seen what I had seen. I had, admit it now, been thrown for a sickening loop. That was all. But the incongruity of a naked man in black high-heeled shoes was something the mind could not entirely dismiss, and there were times afterwards when he, never seen again, contributed to a larger perplexity

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that stirred the lees around and around, before more immediate matters, claiming attention, allowed them to settle again.

There was a man in the theatre with groping hands. There was a man on the streetcar with insistent thighs. There was a man who grinned triumphantly and walked quickly away after he trailed one down a drizzly street at dusk and finally succeeded in his aim of thrusting an unexpected hand under one's raincoat.

I remembered them as I plucked the pansies, took them over to Margarita's house, came back home, answered the door, received the amaryllis, the callas, the pinks, and arranged them in the blue potato glass on top of the buffet. I remembered another man, Mohandas Gandhi, probably a stranger to this company, not only because I had been reading on him of late, but because he seemed to be the only unimpeachable authority who had ever been called on to give public advice in this connection. When someone had delicately asked Gandhi, "What is a woman to do when she is attacked by miscreants?," naming the alternatives of violent self-defense and immediate flight, he had replied, "For me, there can be no preparation for violence. All preparation must be for non-violence if courage of the highest type is to be developed. Violence can only be tolerated as being preferable always to cowardice. Therefore I would have no boats ready for flight. . . . " Then he had soared on to the nobler implications of non-violence, reproaching the world for its cowardice in arming itself with the atomic bomb.

I understood. When I first read these words, I had said, "Why, of course," smiling at the unnecessary alarms of some people. But I had read the words at a rarefied period, forgetting Mary, forgetting the high-heeled shoes. I decided now that the inspiration they gave to his probably feminine questioner was small potatoes. Of all the men suspected of sainthood, Gandhi, measured by his own testimony, should have been able to offer the most concrete comfort here. But he had evaded the issue. In place of the tangible example, vague words. Gandhi, in face of the ubiquitous womanly fear, was a failure. All he had really said was: don't even think about it. Then (I guessed), holding up his strong, bony brown hand, he had shaken his white-fuzzed, compactly-shaped head slowly back and forth and declined to hear the ifs and buts. The rest, as they say, was silence.

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But could I have momentarily borrowed Gandhi's attitude to life and death, what would I have done as the man who called himself Tony rang my number? With enough straining, with maybe a resort to urgent, concentrated prayer, could I have found the gentle but effective words to make Tony see that there were more charming ways to spend a morning? I practiced this angle for awhile:

"I'm afraid you *do* have the wrong number." Soberly, hang up. Disconcerting enough, but rather negative.

"It's a nice day for the beach, sir. Why don't you go swimming?—might help you cool off a little." The voice with a compassionate smile. Too flippant.

"There are many lonely women in the world, and there are more acceptable ways to meet them than this. Have you tried joining a Lonely Hearts club? Don't you have any kind of hobby?" Condescending, as though I were forever above his need. Ambiguously worded, too, that last, fraught with the possibility of an abrupt answer.

"Listen, you know you aren't supposed to go around doing things like this. I think I know what made you do it, though, and I think a psychiatrist would help you quite a bit, if you'd cooperate." The enlightened woman's yap. Probably'd hang up on me.

Anyway, it was too late. And, after all, Gandhi was Gandhi, an old man, moreover dead, and I was I, a young woman, more or less alive. Since I was unable to hit on the proper pacifist approach, since, indeed, I doubted the efficacy of the pacifist approach in this crisis, should I, eschewing cowardice, have shouted bitter, indignant words to frighten Tony? Not that, either. Besides, I hadn't gauged his mood. He had spoken casually enough, but there had been an undertone of something. Restrained glee? Playfulness? Confidence? Desperation? I didn't know.

Then, to help protect my sisters, should I have turned toward the official avenues? Was it my responsibility to have responded with pretended warmth, invited him over, and had the police waiting with me when he arrived? Say I had sorrowfully pressed the matter, say Tony were consequently found guilty (of abusing his communication privileges, of course)—the omnipotent they (representing us) would have merely restricted his liberty for awhile, in the name of punishment. What would he have done when he was let go, his debt to society as completely repaid as society, who had created his condition,

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could make him repay? Telephones in working order abound, with telephone books conveniently alongside them, containing any number of women's names, addresses, and numbers.

And what did Tony do when the sound of my receiver crashed painfully in his ear? Did he laugh and proceed to some other number? His vanity bruised, did he curse? Or perhaps he felt shame, thinking, "My God, what am I doing, what am I doing?" Whatever, whatever —I knew I had discovered yet another circle to put away with my collection of circles. I was back to what I had started with, the helpless, absolutely useless knowledge that the days and nights must surely be bleak for a man who knew the compulsion to thumb through the telephone directory for a woman's name, any woman's name; that this bleakness, multiplied infinite times (see almost any daily paper), was a great, dark sickness on the earth that no amount of pansies, pinks, or amaryllis, thriving joyously in what garden, however well-ordered and pointed to with pride, could ever begin to assuage.

The telephone rings. Startled, I go warily, wondering whether it might not be Tony again, calling perhaps to avenge the blow to pride by anonymous invective, to raise self-esteem by letting it be known that he is a practical joker. I hold my breath after I say, "Hello?"

It is the familiar voice, slightly querulous but altogether precious, of my aunt Miné. She says I am not to plan anything for supper. She has made something special, ricecakes with Indian bean frosting, as well as pickled fish on vinegared rice. She has also been able to get some yellow-tail, to slice and eat raw. All these things she and Uncle are bringing over this evening. Is about five o'clock too early?

It is possible she wonders at my enthusiastic appreciation, which is all right, but all out of proportion.

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Mario Praz

HEMINGWAY IN ITALY

I must apologize if, speaking of the influence of modern American authors on Italian fiction, I begin by quoting myself. The first article that ever appeared in Italy on Hemingway was published in the Turin daily paper *La Stampa* in June, 1929, with my signature. Hemingway's first important book, *In Our Time,* had been published five years before, in 1924, so the Italian press was not doing badly this time in keeping the public informed of literary events in the Anglo-Saxon world. I won't say that twenty years is the usual time the light of a foreign star takes to travel as far as Italy, but literary vogues usually did take more than five years to reach us in the twenties, and usually came via France. There was no question of a French intermediary this time. The circumstances in which I came to know of Hemingway rob my "discovery" a little of its glamour. At that time I was teaching in an English university, and, whenever I was in London, I used to see T. S. Eliot and the people of the *Criterion,* of which I was a contributor, and I think I owe to Eliot my first acquaintance with Hemingway's work. My reaction was immediate, and the article I wrote in *La Stampa,* with the title *"Un giovane narratore americano,"* contained a challenge which was not left unanswered by the Italian literary press. This was what I said:

> Our present period seems to mark the triumph of narrative art. I do not only speak of France and England, where the traditions of the novel and the short story can be traced back to a distant date, but even Italy teems with skillful storytellers. Nowadays, nearly everybody in Italy seems to know how to write a plausible story. It is the gold reserve of narrative genius accumulated during the last century which allows so much paper currency in our time. Because, after all, we live on the crumbs of the banquet of the great French, Russian, and English novelists of the nineteenth century; and today's stories are well contrived, and

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convincing, because their authors have learned a lesson either from Chekhov, or from Henry James, or from Proust. It is not even strictly necessary that young authors should take the trouble of reading the classics of the novel: their lesson is in the air. The short story has reached its moment of perfection and saturation just as the sonnet had done in the sixteenth century, when sonnets, so to say, got written by themselves, so saturated was the air with Petrarchan strains. And as in the sixteenth century even grammarians knew how to polish off a pretty sonnet, so nowadays even critics know how to write a plausible short story. One wonders what is going to survive out of so much fecundity. The case of the sixteenth-century sonneteers, all perfect and interchangeable—seldom if ever read by posterity—is a warning.

Now Ernest Hemingway has a new accent in this multitude of storytellers; it would be next to impossible to find in him an echo of the current recipes. Maybe because he is an American, and America may be considered relatively virgin soil, so far as literary traditions are concerned. If you have to think of somebody else, you may think of Defoe, who in *Moll Flanders* causes his heroine to talk in a sublimated version of the style of a maidservant's letter. Nothing, at first, seems simpler than Hemingway's technique: he confines himself to repeating speeches almost drily, to describing the scene with the barest particulars. His style adheres to the outlines of things with an almost impersonal firmness. If one can talk of an objective style, it is his. There is nothing in him of that cerebral tendency which cannot do away with certain standards and categories, and no sooner contemplates an object than it deforms and judges it, so as to give an artificial, rhetorical, vision of the world... It would be difficult to imagine a more elementary style than Hemingway's: the greatest possible economy of means, as in a natural process. He wraps things round by a repeated verbal contact; he seems to possess the spontaneous wisdom of the dowser, who divines the presence of underground water. Hemingway relates half a sentence, sketches the expression of a face, a twitching of the lips, a nothing; but this nothing throws light on a whole situation: a maximum of evocation with a minimum display of means. One may object that this can be said of the art of every great storyteller; but the novelty consists in this, that the austere fitness which in a European is, as a rule, the result of a laborious process of simplification, seems to exist naturally in this American. He cannot help adhering to the things he describes, so much so that a sophisticated reader may find his way of approach monotonous in the long run. Any subject is good for Hemingway: a fishing party, a conversation overheard in a military hospital or in a sleeping-car or in a bar, a boxing-match, a bullfight. He has a definite propensity for subjects of this latter description, since he seems sometimes to identify "life" with the display of violence and brutality, so that blows and blood appear occasionally to be regarded as high human values. But Hemingway has not read Pirandello, so that his boxers are not suffering from metaphysical languors. And he knows next to nothing about the history of religions, so that his *Matadores* in the act of stabbing the bull between its horns are not reminded, like Montherlant's, of Mithra's

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sacrifice. One is indeed at a loss to imagine what his readings may have been. Hemingway's point of view has so little in common with the aesthete's, that occasionally it may even appear strictly utilitarian. He singles out details of a practical character with the humdrum precision of the man in the street.

I am quoting extensively from my 1929 article, not because of the originality of my remarks, but because I presented Hemingway to the Italian public as an opposite case of whatever they knew in the way of narrative art. I tried to convey what D. S. Savage has said much more forcibly in the London literary miscellany *Focus*: "Hemingway is, within very narrow limits, a stylist who has brought to something like perfection a curt, unemotional, factual style which is an attempt at the objective presentation of experience. A bare, dispassionate reporting of external actions is all that Hemingway as a rule attempts, in presenting his characters and incidents. His typical central character, his "I," may be described generally as a bare consciousness stripped to the human minimum, impassively recording the objective data of experience. He has no contact with ideas, no visible emotions, no hopes for the future, and no memory. He is, as far as it is possible to be so, a *de-personalized* being." These words express admirably what I wanted to convey to a public of Italian writers and readers, steeped in the delicious sea of Proust. I did not try to see behind the façade, to reveal what view of life was behind that de-personalized style. This has been done, however, in Mr. Savage's essay, where he shows how the entire extrusion of personality into the outward sensational world makes Hemingway's characters the inwardly-passive victims of a meaningless determinism; how the profound spiritual inertia, the inner vacuity and impotence which is a mark of all Hemingway's projected characters, ends in a deadening sense of boredom and negation which can only be relieved by violent, though still essentially meaningless, activity; how the final upshot of it all is the total absence of a sense of life, so that life is brought into a sensational vividness only by contrast with the nullity of death.

I did not try to see through Hemingway's world; what interested me was the aspect hinted at in these words of Savage: "A novelist, of admitted literary merit, who lacks all the equipment generally expected of a practitioner of his art except a certain artistic scrupu-

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lousness and poetic sense, is something of a phenomenon." For Savage, Hemingway represents "a special form of that which might be termed the *proletarianization* of literature: the adaptation of the technical artistic conscience of the sub-average human consciousness." To a literature overripe with culture, as ours was in the twenties, so much so that it seemed quite natural to compare us with Petrarch's followers, I offered as a curative the example of an art which seemed to spring from virgin soil. A return to nature has been, every now and then, the infallible remedy for a too sophisticated society. Now Italian literature, at the time I wrote that article, had preciosity and traditionalism as its dominant characteristics, its main currents being still the same ones which had prevailed in the nineteenth century, and which can be conveniently described by the epithet: Biedermeier. Italian narrative was then, and is still to a large extent, steeped in a Biedermeier atmosphere: realism, bourgeois or peasant life in the provinces, avoidance of sharp contrasts, Christian resignation, genre-painting, conversation-pieces. In short, such characteristics which fit to a nicety what German critics have defined as *Biedermeierkultur,* from the name of the humble schoolmaster whose homely poems were burlesqued in *Fliegende Blätter* in the 1850's.

The Biedermeier world is a small world of common sense and healthy habits, delights of the home, the cult of a tamed and well-groomed nature, observance of sound principles, love for the concrete, along with, ever so often, a flight on the wings of a sweet, and often gently sad, dream: a world of bourgeois ethics and bourgeois art, shrinking from extremes, half-classical, half-romantic—the world which in England is called Victorian. It has been said that there never was an Italian romantic movement in the true sense of the word; that same common sense and well-balanced taste which kept Italy free from the raptures and excesses of romanticism (not even Leopardi, for all his pessimism, is a romantic), made her the ideal country for a blossoming of *Biedermeierkultur.* I cannot speak here of the whole course of Italian literature in the last century; but every student of Italian abroad knows at least two Italian books of the nineteenth century: Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* and De Amicis' *Cuore*: the traditional ethics and quiet humor of the former, the sentimentality bordering on mawkishness of the latter, are typically

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bourgeois, or Biedermeier, products. Croce's four volumes of *La letteratura della nuova Italia* offer a gallery of portraits of typically Biedermeier artists. Indeed, if one considers the whole of Italian literature, its representative genius is not Dante, but Ariosto, *"Ludovico della tranquillità"*: the bourgeois poet whose uneventful life culminated in the building of his little house in Ferrara—*"parva sed apta mihi"*—who had no "message," but delighted in a pageant of fantastic adventures, tempering the superhuman with the humorous, reducing everything to a golden level of harmony; a writer of tales which could appeal equally to the courtier and to the gondolier. It is usual to refer to the provincial character of Italy (where there is no predominant cultural center) when accounting for the output of short stories and novels which formed in the twenties, and still form in the forties, the bulk of her literary production. Books whose best portions deal as a rule with the childhood of the protagonist (a thin disguise of the author himself) spent in some little town far away from the modern world, simple stories of family troubles with a mother up front; half-yearning, half-melancholy, conjuring up streets and squares undisturbed by modern traffic—sad experiences made beautiful in recollection, love for concrete detail, no pretence of metaphysical complications—how many books of this kind, generally written in very good Italian, have been appearing year after year, enjoying a moderate success and a still more moderate sale, to recede finally into the background where their features dissolve in the uniform Biedermeier color!

To this kind of storytelling, the influence of Proust and, less evidently, of Henry James, has added a spice of *intimismo,* a precious intricacy of pattern, stressing a shade of sensibility here, deepening the sense of the past there, and altogether leaving the imprint of a dulcet cadence, as in a Petrarchan sonnet. Joyce and Virginia Woolf have favored a still deeper preciosity, the *stile allusivo,* flights of fancy too remote to be traced by the lay reader, and prose has often vied with poetry in the *trobar clus,* as the Provençal poets used to say, or *ermetismo,* as modern critics have termed this exquisite, but unsociable tendency, the *ultima Thule* of individualism. I shall only mention one name, in order to make you realize what kind of Italian story-teller I had in mind when I held up the example of Hemingway to our writers: Gianna Manzini, born in Siena at the beginning

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of this century, the author of *Tempo innamorato* (1928). As an instance of Hemingway's style I quoted in my article a long passage from "Cat in the Rain," and advised a study of "Big Two-Hearted River."

My article in *La Stampa* was resented in certain quarters: it was said, among other things, that long ago Italian literature had gone through the phase represented by Hemingway's stories; one must not forget that those were the years of the Fascist rule, and nationalism was rampant, so much so that when, in 1936, I wrote about Hemingway's *Green Hills of Africa,* the Fascist censorship must have been caught napping when it allowed the article to appear at all: Hemingway's name was taboo among us because of his attitude during the Abyssinian campaign.

In the meantime, however, other critics had been speaking of Hemingway with praise, chiefly on account of his novel about the Italian front, *Farewell to Arms;* and what information the Italians could not get from their own literary reviews, they gathered from French magazines, always widespread in our country. By 1941, Hemingway's work was not only so well known but so widely imitated that one of our leading critics, Emilio Cecchi (who had helped to acquaint the Italian public with Hemingway) wrote in the *Corriere della sera*: "We keep stumbling everywhere against this type of dialogue, whether we read a short story or a reporter's correspondence."

Among the first to learn from Hemingway, as well as from other American novelists, Elio Vittorini became known in the thirties through his translations of D. H. Lawrence as well as original short stories and impressions of places (*Piccola borghesia, Nei Morlacchi*): he was then a Fascist and had himself photographed with the front page of the *Corriere della sera* under his eyes, with the "Discorso del Duce" well in evidence: he was then very young. In 1941 he wrote his best book, *Conversazione in Sicilia;* in the previous year he had published a selection of short stories by William Saroyan (*Che ve ne sembra dell'America?*). Hemingway and Saroyan are the evident literary sponsors of the book which he published in 1945, *Uomini e no*: from the very title, which sounds very quaint in Italian until one realizes that the model has been supplied for it by Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not,* combined with Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (*Uomini e topi* in the Italian translation).

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Uomini e no claims to be the novel of the Italian resistance and partisan war: the Italian counterpart of *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* Vittorini has come out of the war a blossoming Communist, the editor of the Communist review *Il Politecnico* which tries to imitate Russian weeklies even in the external appearance. Vittorini and another Sicilian, the painter Guttuso, both proletarian artists, are, together with Silone, the only names international literary correspondents have got hold of in present-day Italian art and letters. In a recent English miscellany *New Road* (no. 4), I read with no little amusement the title of an essay by Paul Potts, "Not since Dante: Ignazio Silone, A Footnote," explained in the course of the article by the curious statement that no one has done so much as Silone to lead Italian literature back towards that glory it has not known since the days of Dante and Guido Cavalcanti. And when Stephen Spender came to Rome, the only name of a young Italian writer he seemed to have heard was that of Vittorini: he and Guttuso were the prominent figures in a gossipy piece on Italian art and letters which appeared in *Vogue.*

The reader has not long to search in *Uomini e no* to discover its secret. The lyrical tone obviously goes back to Saroyan, but the continuous dialogues, the tough manner, the delineation of characters, the crudity of certain episodes, could not have existed without the example of Hemingway, particularly of *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* The minute narration of the torture of the peddler Giulaj, on whom a German officer sets his dogs, finds a counterpart in the description in Hemingway's novel of the massacre of all the fascists of a small town, done to death between two lines of peasants armed with flails. Enne 2, the protagonist of Vittorini's book, is in love with a girl, Berta; they go to the house of an old woman, Selva, who belongs to the movement. Now Selva's behavior to the lovers reminds one immediately of the behavior of elderly Pilar, the partisan woman, to the couple, Robert Jordan and Maria. Both elderly women push the young ones into the arms of the young men, and at the same time are jealous of their youth and beauty. A passage from Vittorini's novel will also illustrate the peculiar mannerisms of his dialogue, a subject to which I shall have to return in a moment:

"Do you think it is odd?" Selva said. "It isn't odd. We've never

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seen you with a companion, and we want you to have a companion. Can't we want you to have a companion?"

She fixed glowing eyes on the man and the woman.

"Can't we want this for a man who is dear to us? A man is happy when he has a companion. Shouldn't a man be happy?"

"Thank you," Enne 2 said. "Thank you, Selva. But. . . . "

"To hell with 'but,' " old Selva said. "Can't we want a man to be happy? We work in order that men may be happy. What good would it do to work if it didn't serve to make men happy? That's why we work. Isn't that why we work?"

"That's why," Enne 2 said.

"Then it is why!" Selva said.

And she kept on fixing her eyes on the man and the woman.

"God!" she said. "Men must be happy. What sense would our work make if men couldn't be happy? You tell me, young woman. Would our work make any sense?"

"I don't know," Berta replied.

And it was as if she hadn't replied, she was very serious; and she lifted her face a moment, but it was as if she hadn't lifted it.

"Would any of our work make sense?"

"No, Selva, I don't think it would."

"Would it make sense? No, it wouldn't make any sense at all."

"It wouldn't make sense. Nothing on earth would make sense."

"Nothing on earth would make sense. Isn't it so, young woman?"

"I don't know," Berta replied again.

"Or would something make sense then?"

"No," Enne 2 replied, "I do not think so."

"Would our clandestine newspapers make sense? Would our plots make sense?"

"I don't think so."

"And our men who get shot? Would they make sense? No, they would not make any sense."

"No, they wouldn't make sense."

"Would anything in the world make sense? Would our bombs make sense?"

"I don't think anything would make sense."

"Nothing would make sense. Or would the enemies we kill make sense?"

"Not even they. I don't think they would."

"No, no. Men must be happy. Everything makes sense only if men can be happy. . . . "

Later on, Selva is alone with Berta:

Selva got up and went behind the table. She looked to see if the water was boiling.

"I hoped you were his companion," she said.

She broke off, but still she did not let Berta speak. She went on: "A man has to have his companion. Even more so if he's one of ours.

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He must be happy. What can he know of what men need if he isn't happy? We are fighting for this. For men to be happy."

She turned round, leaning on the table with both hands. "Do you follow what I'm saying?"

"It's simple," Berta replied.

"Very simple," Selva said. "A man who is fighting in order that men may be happy should know what men need in order to be happy. And he must have a companion. He must be happy with his companion."

"Hasn't he a companion?" Berta asked.

Selva looked again to see if the water was boiling. "You ask me? I hoped you were. . . . I never knew that he had one." She came around the table with the teapot and two cups. "The first time I saw you," she said, "I thought immediately that you ought to be his companion. You are just what he would want a woman to be. But you," she asked, "do you believe what I am saying?"

"Why not?" Berta said.

"If I were young," Selva continued, "I would like to have been his companion. But I might be his mother. But when I saw you I thought that you must be the one."

If we read after this the various passages in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* where old Pilar eggs the two lovers on, we shall find a similarity of situations, of atmosphere, of treatment, although no single passage of Vittorini can be said to imitate Hemingway closely. In both authors the scenes consist almost exclusively of dialogues. But the passage from Vittorini's novel illustrates a peculiarity of his dialogues as compared with Hemingway's. True, there are repetitions in Hemingway's dialogues, as there are in ordinary life, but we very seldom get from them the impression of exercises in conversation (such as we might find, with all the cases and tenses and moods, in a foreign-language grammar). There are pages and pages of Vittorini which read like such exercises. The nucleus of his dialogues is a triplet. First a statement, then the same repeated with a query, then repeated again as a stronger asseveration:

—*Lui ora non ha da fare con molte compagne.*
—*Lui ha da fare con molte compagne?*
—*Non ha più da fare con molte compagne.*

Very frequently the echo extends beyond the triplet:

—Sembra che si vedano le montagne.
—Sembra? Si vedono. Sono le montagne.
—Sono le montagne?

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—Sono le montagne.
—Si vedono le montagne da Milano?
—Non le vedi? Si vedono.
—Non sapevo che si vedessero.

Thus Hemingway's technique, devised to carry the impression of actual life by reproducing word by word a dialogue of short sentences, becomes in Vittorini a mannerism, because he is not such an impassive onlooker and listener as Hemingway, but invests everything with a lyrical mood, or merely with a rhetorical emphasis. The effect is very curious. Starting from Hemingway, Vittorini comes near certain effects of Charles Péguy, whose exasperating repetitions give the impression of a person seized with the symptoms of general paralysis. Péguy had caught the rhythm of peasants' talk, and tried to couch it in an artistic pattern; Vittorini does the same with the talk of the man in the street. But Hemingway never tries to impose a pattern on his dialogues: hence their impression of freshness, even in monotony. Thus the lesson of simplicity and directness of Hemingway has been lost on a writer hopelessly predisposed to mannerism. This does not mean, however, that the lesson is not there. A fake postulates the genuine thing. Vittorini's tone rings false, affected, childishly rhetorical, but his model is still recognizable. The whole thing looks as absurd as an eighteenth-century European imitation of Chinese art, or as a Japanese picture of Napoleon as a prisoner in St. Helena, with the English soldiers in the garb of samurai. Vittorini's partisans talk more like the shepherds in Theocritus's *Idyls* than like the men who fought in Milan against the Germans: *Uomini e no* stands to *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in the same relation as Callimachus to Homer, if for a moment we could call Hemingway a Homer and Vittorini a Callimachus. If to us the result of Vittorini's effort seems therefore to be a new preciosity, we may consider with amusement how far he has traveled from his original intention, which must obviously have been a *proletarianization* of literature, the adaptation of the technical artistic conscience to the sub-average human consciousness, according to D. S. Savage's definition which I have already quoted.

The influence of American fiction, particularly of Hemingway, is also apparent in another Italian war book which has caused a certain stir—Giuseppe Berto's *Il cielo è rosso*. This novel is the story of

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a group of Italian adolescents whom the bombardment of a northern Italian town has deprived of their parents and homes. Tullio, Carla, Giulia, and a half-witted little girl live in the ruins of a devastated area; they are joined by Daniele, who has come out of a priests' college to find his home destroyed and himself alone in the world. Tullio is the chief of a gang of boys who live by stealing and blackmail: part of their profit is destined to the relief of the poor and to the funds of their party (they're Communists): in a word, he reincarnates the type of the generous outlaw which is a well-known figure of early romanticism. Carla is also a type one comes across in romantic literature, the kind-hearted prostitute: though only fifteen, with the connivance of her lover Tullio, she earns her living as a whore. To this depraved, though not repulsive, couple, is contrasted the pair, Daniele and Giulia, who are essentially honest and good, and find it very hard to adapt themselves to the new circumstances: they pathetically succumb, Giulia by dying of consumption, Daniele by committing suicide. And then Tullio is killed in the course of an unlucky gangsters' expedition. The whole novel is steeped in a profoundly melancholy atmosphere, from the description of the lazy, marshy riverland and the provincial Venetian town at the beginning to the shooting-party in the marshes, which forms the only idyllic episode of the whole book, and on to Daniele's suicide under a train in the end. *Il cielo è rosso* is certainly one of the saddest novels ever written, and, for all its American influence, is tinged with a typical Latin sentimentalism. Italian readers have been reminded of De Amicis' *Cuore*; if one wants to sum up one's impressions, one could say that *Il cielo è rosso* is Murger's *Vie de bohème* translated into terms of a modern American novel. (American influence on Berto, incidentally, is not merely bookish; he was made a prisoner in the Tunis campaign and spent two years in the United States.) Yet whatever strictures one may make, the novel remains one of the most remarkable books written in Europe in the post-war period.

One of the most obvious signs of American influence on Berto is again the abundance and character of the dialogues. It would naturally be preposterous to ascribe every example of dialogue to Hemingway's example. But whenever you come across what purports to be a faithful reproduction of conversation, with all its repetitions and apparently meaningless expletives, with its short sentences falling

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like drops in a vacuum, creating an atmosphere almost by the significance of the pauses, by barely hinted gestures and actions—whenever you come across this, you may depend on it that an American influence is at hand. Take for instance this passage in *Il cielo è rosso*:

"They're obstinate," Tullio said. "The most obstinate people I ever saw. Sometimes they stand in front of the town hall or in front of the military command and wait. They wait from morning to night. They don't ask them what they want any more; they'll go on waiting all the same. Maybe some day something will turn up, because they are so obstinate."

Or this:

"Then there is the girl's father," Tullio said. "He's a druggist, the owner of a big pharmacy. The girl will be a druggist too, like her father. I do not know how many years she still has to study, but she's sure to become a druggist, because she's a clever girl. She helps out now once in a while in the store."

A single word is the keynote of both these passages: it is repeated over and over again, so as to give the listener the maximum impact. The bare word is occasionally used in incantation, as if, by sheer repetition, it could take on all the life of the thing itself. Passages like these I have been quoting may not be typical in themselves: but the repetitions, the short sentences, give in the long run the impression of simplicity, of elementariness, of closeness to nature, which we associate with American novels, in particular Hemingway's. An episode of the American soldiers who are distributing food to a crowd of beggars is too long to quote, but a small portion of it will indicate some characteristics of Berto's prose:

"Whom have you got at home?" the sergeant asked.

"Two sisters," replied the boy. "They're smaller than me. They'll be very happy if I bring home some white bread."

"You've no father?" the sergeant asked.

"He died in the bombardment," the boy said. "My mother died in the bombardment, also."

The sergeant came over to the boy and put his hand on his head, then sat down on the box on which the old man had been sitting. "Sit down," he said. The boy sat down again. The sergeant did not speak, and he felt a little embarrassed. "They're singing," he said.

"Yes," said the sergeant.

The melancholy song of the soldiers, with a few notes of a guitar, reached their ears.

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"They want to go back home," the sergeant said. "That's why they're singing."

"What do the words mean?" the boy asked.

"That there's a happy country somewhere, far away," the sergeant said.

"It's nice," said the boy.

They listened in silence until the song was over. Then the boy asked again: "Tell me what I have to do."

"Nothing," the sergeant said. "Nothing this evening. Tomorrow, come here at seven."

"O.K.," said the boy. He was still holding the dirty mess tin in his hand and asked: "Should I wash the mess tin?"

"Yes, wash it up," the sergeant said.

The boy went to where the water casks were, and washed the mess tin by rubbing it with earth. A soldier who saw him gave him a piece of soap, and he washed the mess tin again with soap. Then he went back to the sergeant. "I would like to dry it," he said, "but I haven't anything to dry it with."

"You don't have to dry it," the sergeant said. He seemed absent-minded, as if he was thinking of something else. The soldiers at the end of the courtyard were still singing.

This spareness of contours, this bare presentation of things, this reproduction of details which seem unessential, are certainly uncommon in Italian literature. Berto is very fond of describing practical occupations in their minute details. For instance:

Giulia smiled, but finding nothing else to say, got up and did not sit down again. She gave a few more pulls to the pump . . . and busied herself with the preparations for the meal. She took some canned meat and some eggs out of the box, she lifted a pan off its hook on the wall, and put everything on a table placed against the wall. She opened the can, broke the eggs, and poured everything in the pan. Then she began to mix. Her gestures were slow, unstudied. Daniele looked at her, and looked also at the door to see whether Carla would come back. She had been gone a long time. Then Giulia took the pot off the fire and began to pour out the vegetables. Daniele went to help her, and took in his hand a tin plate with many holes, which was used to drain the vegetables.

Giulia smiled at him with gratitude. "Don't scald yourself," she said. She cautiously poured out the contents of the pot. The vegetables rested on the perforated tin plate, and the water dropped into a basin underneath. A thick white vapor rose, full of the smell of the boiled vegetables.

"Shall I go and throw the water away?" Daniele asked.

"No," Giulia said, "we can use it to wash the dishes."

Now, I won't try to prove that such minute cooking operations

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have never before been described in Italian literature, though I would be at a loss to quote anything like them. But open any book of Hemingway, and you will find the model. Take for instance this passage from "Big Two-Hearted River":

> Nick was hungry. He did not believe he had ever been hungrier. He opened and emptied a can of pork and beans and a can of spaghetti into the frying pan.
>
> "I've got a right to eat this kind of stuff, if I'm willing to carry it," Nick said. His voice sounded strange in the darkening wood. He did not speak again.
>
> He started a fire with some chunks of pine he got with the axe from a stump. Over the fire he stuck a wire grill, pushing the four legs down into the ground with his boot. Nick put the frying pan on the grill over the flames. He was hungrier. The beans and spaghetti warmed. Nick stirred them and mixed them together. They began to bubble, making little bubbles that rose with difficulty to the surface. There was a good smell. Nick got out a bottle of tomato catchup and cut four slices of bread. The little bubbles were coming faster now. Nick sat down beside the fire and lifted the frying pan off. He poured about half the contents out into the tin plate. It spread slowly on the plate. Nick knew it was too hot. He poured on some tomato catchup. He knew the beans and spaghetti were still too hot. He looked at the fire, then at the tent, he was not going to spoil it all by burning his tongue. For years he had never enjoyed fried bananas because he had never been able to wait for them to cool. His tongue was very sensitive.

I said before that I cannot remember anything like this kind of description in Italian literature, and I may as well say, in any other literature I know. If such minute operations have ever been described before, there was no emphasis on them; they were not meant to stand out like something particularly significant. With Hemingway they have ceased to be part of the background; they are presented as important episodes. And the same has happened with the seemingly insignificant details of ordinary conversation. Before Hemingway, dialogues in fiction or on the stage were the result of a selection: all immaterial portions were left out; questions and answers followed a more or less rigid pattern dictated by art. The utmost artificiality prevailed in the stichomythy of the Greek tragedies, as in Alexandrian couplets of the French plays, or the witty repartees of Restoration comedy; but even the dialogues in the novels of the naturalist school of the nineteenth century, for all they pretended to be copied from real life, are arranged so that, so far as the author can help, there is nothing superfluous. Hemingway has shown the

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value of the apparently superfluous, the strange beauty of the commonest things when seen from a certain angle, so as to deserve almost the praise Baudelaire gave to the great seventeenth-century French sculptor Puget: *"Toi qui sus ramasser la beauté des goujats."* Thus he represents the extreme limit of proletarianization so far reached by literature.

At first only kings were considered fit characters for tragedies: at first only great events were to be a theme for narration: then Montaigne appeared and the apparently insignificant shades of humor and sensibility were brought into literary expression; then landscapes, bourgeois interiors, still-lifes formed subjects for independent pictures; and so little by little the humble sides of society and of life have been given attention, until they have come nowadays to the limelight. *Un Coeur simple* is only an episode, though one of the greatest, in Flaubert's career: Hemingway's, on the other hand, is a world of simple hearts and simple minds, simple-looking even if they are complex: in him we see the return to primitivism in an age of great technical development, the standard being set by the man in the street as it once used to be set by the court. His influence on the two Italian authors I have discussed, both of whom once belonged to the left wing of the Fascist party (one is now a prominent Communist), is tell-tale enough.

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William Carlos Williams

THE TESTAMENT OF PERPETUAL CHANGE

**Mortal Prudence, handmaid of divine Providence*
Wallgreen carries Culture to the West:
hath inscrutable reckoning with Fate and Fortune:
At Cortez, Colorado the Indian prices
We sail a changeful sea through halcyon days and storm,
a bottle of cheap perfume, furtively—
and when the ship laboreth, our stedfast purpose
but doesn't buy while under my hotel window
trembles like as a compass in a binacle.
a Radiance rose spreads its shell-thin
Our stability is but balance, and wisdom lies
petals above the non-irrigated garden
in masterful administration of the unforseen.
among the unprotected desert foliage.

'Twas late in my long journey, when I had clomb to where
Having returned from Mesa Verde, the ruins
the path was narrowing and the company few
of the Cliff Dwellers' palaces were still in
possession of my mind

* The opening lines of Robert Bridges', *The Testament of Beauty.*

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William Gibson

TOBIAS' PRAYER

Dog and angel of skills
Who barked and chimed me a progress
Sweet in the sour, air of sewer hung, carious
Tenement jails

I grew in, beast and boy,
Toeing me strait in a clubfoot ring
Of lockstep and stumble poor, by snarl and song
Beset me free.

Now I am come to my troth
And devilled bride, the opulent
Hip of the world, great bullion teat, metropolis,
Divulged in her pith

Where, all inroad, she lies
Cobbled with spice and skulls of good men
At my feet, I do fear, I do fear, nor dare devil in
Upon her lubricities

Lacking the hobnails of grief.
To my wedding feast now let me conjure
All souls, misbegotten and damned, if I am a stranger
To ills, or deaf

To cries I turned into songs
When song was my turnkey, and only toil
To run with my saviour angel and dog, in a world
Of gifts, and wrongs.

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MODERN DOCUMENTS

Renzo Rava

THE USEFUL LIFE OF A DEAD MAN

The case of people who, after their death, lead a long and useful life through their deeds and work, is common. Nor is the instance rare of men who gave such meaning to their voluntary death that the memory of their supreme act lives on long after they have disappeared. But the accidental, unintended death of an obscure man as the start of a brilliant career of service is indeed exceptional.

Such is the case of my friend Mario Palermo.

Mario went out one night during the autumn of 1920 to buy cigarettes. It was election time in his native city, Brescia, in northern Italy, and clashes between Fascist and Leftist groups were frequent. A few shots were exchanged that night and a stray bullet hit Mario just as he stepped out of the tobacco shop.

He died instantly.

Little space was given to the fact in Brescia's newspapers. Young Palermo had no party affiliations. He had graduated from Law School a few weeks before his death. Of a retiring disposition, he had few friends. He lived with his father—a doctor who had abandoned a profession which he actually never practiced—his mother and his two sisters, in an old, comfortable, middle-class house. In short, he had nothing which could attract public attention.

Thus his death remained within the private domain of his close relatives.

But the situation changed two years later. Power had been conquered by Fascism. The country had been divided into the so-called Fascist Federal Federations, each headed by a Federal Secretary, and the search for martyrs, martyrs after whom streets could be named—martyrs to whom monuments could be erected—had begun. The problem of martyrs is, in all revolutions, a difficult one. If many die for the revolution, the choice becomes perplexing. More-

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over, the high toll of the supporters has a tendency to remind the country that the rate of casualties must have been at least as high among the opponents, and revolutions, particularly when they come of age, like better to consider themselves as heroic and not as bloody. If, on the other hand, few people die, as it happened in Italy, and if, even worse, no general pool is set up from which martyrs might be equitably apportioned, then the search may become harassing.

In 1923 the Provincial Secretary of Brescia was desperately short of heroes. He had just lost to the Secretary of a neighboring province an argument over a very nice case: a young nobleman who had been killed by a group of peasants of his estate. True enough, the young man had been shot mainly because he attempted to revive, in the name of Fascism, certain rights which his feudal ancestors had enjoyed over the feminine inhabitants of their fief. But still he had been a regular and fervent member of the party. The other Secretary, a meticulous man, had shown that the murder had occurred in a section of the estate which lay within the boundary of his province and not of Brescia's province, and had been perpetrated by peasants who lived there. On the basis of this array of facts, he had been able to secure the martyr.

Thus, when the Secretary of Brescia was reminded that there was a politically unclaimed casualty of an encounter between Fascists and anti-Fascists, he decided that the opportunity was too good to be missed. It would be proclaimed, he resolved, that Mario had fallen while fighting the treacherous enemies of Fascism.

He did not have an easy task, however. Brescia's Fascist martyrs were to be given solemn final burial in a chapel which was adjacent to one of the most illustrious churches of the city. Mario had been a Jew, and the Prior of the church who, anyway, did not like the idea of martyrs to a political cause trying to rank so close to martyrs to the cause of religion, refused to accept him. Objections were also raised by the family. Mario's mother and sister did not have any strong religious beliefs, but they disliked Fascism deeply. Moreover, they had loved first Mario and then their grief over his death with a most jealous love. They found something indecent in the farce which, by building up Mario as a hero, would take away from them the privacy of their great sorrow.

But the Secretary was a man of great determination.

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A good deal of talent was spent to convince the Prior that a compromise solution was possible. Mario would not be actually buried in the chapel. His tomb would be a cenotaph, but nothing would indicate externally that it was different from the other graves.

As to the family, the old doctor developed into a powerful ally. The idea of becoming the father of a martyr appealed to him. He felt, rather confusedly, that it would give him the possibility to taste again, even though vicariously, the joys of paternity of which Mario's death had deprived him. So that he also found his compromise. The mother and sister of Mario would not oppose Mario's political canonization publicly. On the other hand, no participation in any official ceremony would be required of them.

Indeed, both the Secretary and Mario's father enjoyed a measure of happiness when, at the dedication of the chapel, the voice of the imposing crowd assembled in the square facing the church, answered "Present" to the call of the names of those, Mario included, who were in the roll of Brescia martyrs.

Of course, while the happiness of the Secretary was untainted by worries—shortly after the dedication he was appointed to an important government post in Rome—the position of the doctor was very different.

He had to keep his role as hidden as possible from his wife and daughters. He had to stand the silent contempt with which they looked at him whenever he attempted to tell them about the various steps of Mario's career as a hero. He even had to conceal, by raising the lapel of his coat, the blackshirt which he wore when called to attend some ceremony. But once out of the house his whole mien would change; he would strut along the streets of the city and finally take his place in the stand reserved for the relatives of the fallen heroes. There, in close contact with the great of the earth, he felt as if his son's graduation day were re-enacted for him in a much more majestic surrounding and he cried with the same tender pride which had made him cry so many years before.

In 1938, when the old doctor had already died, the picture changed once more.

Under German pressure, Italy had adopted anti-Semitism as the official policy of the government, and Mario became a source of great embarrassment to the Federal Secretary at that time.

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To disavow him formally was not feasible. By calling the attention of the public to an early Fascist martyr who had been of the Jewish faith, the purpose of the anti-Semitic propaganda might very well be defeated. Even worse, doubt might be cast upon the purity of other heroes. To keep him in the roll of Brescia martyrs would leave the Secretary open to attack from the zealots of Italo-German collaboration. Something had to be done, thought the Secretary, and soon, but without facing the issue squarely. Silent disappearance, he concluded, would be the best solution.

Thus one day the chapel was closed to the public under the excuse of repairs. When it was reopened some time later, Mario's cenotaph was not there any longer but no empty space could be noted. By a delicate work of masonry, the whole end wall of the chapel had been brought forward, the ancient architectural motifs had been reproduced so that only an exceptionally careful observer could find out that Mario's cenotaph was missing.

Still, Mario's fame lingered in the city: enough to spare his mother and sisters the many little indignities which otherwise anti-Semitism, unpopular as it was in Italy, would have nevertheless inflicted on them.

But in 1943, after the Italian surrender, the Germans took actual control of northern Italy. The time of petty insults was over. The Germans were out for real flesh and blood.

Mario's mother was too sick to escape the country or even to go in hiding and his sisters—two old spinsters by that time—lived in a state of constant fear. Many of their friends had already been deported. The situation was growing worse with the approach of the Allied armies in the early spring of 1945. So that they finally felt that they had only one way to safety open: to demand protection for the mother and sisters of a Fascist martyr. The remembrance of so many years of noble aloofness was troublesome. It seemed to them that they were destroying the last refuge of honesty where they had kept alive Mario's true memory, not ridiculed by a political disguise. But fear of atrocious death prevailed. One day, the younger sister put on a black dress, resembling the mourning attire which she had seen worn by the relatives of fallen heroes on ceremonial days, and, without telling her mother, went to visit the dreaded Fascist leader of the whole region.

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The leader was a member of the so-called "old guard": one of those members of the Party who had distinguished themselves by many deeds of violence during the first years of the Revolution and who had been set aside when the Revolution, after having conquered power, had tried to look respectable. Now that the question of respectability had become completely irrelevant in the desperate effort of the Fascist regime to keep itself afloat, he had been called to an important post.

Nothing of the dashing fighter was left in the pale, fat man who confronted Mario's sister when she managed to gain admission to the leader's office. He looked nervous, almost as nervous as he was. Evidently he lacked totally the support of that *Götterdämmerung* feeling in which his German comrades found a gloomy solace.

The leader listened to her without interrupting. When she had finished her plea, he still kept silent. Turning his eyes from her, he fixed an empty stare at the window. He then wrote a few lines on a piece of paper and, without uttering a word, stepped into the next room. She could hear his voice in a rather long speech but could not understand what he was saying. After a moment, another voice answered, a very loud voice, this one with a heavy German accent. This time she could grasp a few sentences. She heard something about Italians being soft and about the danger of letting "Jews die for you when they are always ready to take advantage of it." When the leader came back he looked even paler than before. Handing to her the piece of paper on which he had been writing—a safe conduct for her mother, her sister, and herself, which besides his signature bore also the stamp of the power of all powers in Brescia, the German Kommandatur—he whispered: "You will remember what I have done for you, will you?"

The mother and sisters of Mario were perfectly undisturbed during the last bloody weeks of German domination.

It was not possible to test what Mario's influence would have been in the very doubtful case of the Fascist leader. The city was controlled by the Partisans for a few days between the German withdrawal and the Allied occupation, and the leader was executed on the same day that the Germans left.

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Paul Mattick

OBSESSIONS OF BERLIN

As against the terror of the bombs, the actual conquest of Berlin was of lesser significance to its inhabitants. Nevertheless, the artillery tore new holes into the ruins, shot away parts of the surviving buildings, killed many people running for food and water. The spray of machine guns is visible almost on every house, every floor, every apartment door. The tanks ground down the streets and sidewalks. The battle was fought section by section, street by street, house by house. It is said that sixty-thousand Russians died in the struggle for Berlin. The estimate may be incorrect, but it reveals the ferocity of the struggle. There are no guesses on the German losses. They lost everything—particularly, however, their illusions about the Russians.

The Russians are Berlin's second great obsession. The rape of the city is burned deep into the minds of its inhabitants because it is associated with their greatest disappointment. Long before the fall of the city, refugees from the East told horrible stories about the Russians' behavior. So did the radio. But wishful thinking discounted these stories as exaggerations and propaganda. At any rate, it could not get worse than it was. The same hope that welcomed Hitler in exchange for the depression welcomed now the Russians in exchange for the bombings.

Berliners who had once belonged to the Communist Party, or sympathized with it, looked upon the Russian conquerors as their liberators. Their disappointment was consequently greater than that experienced by the great mass of apolitical people and passive Nazis. Even the less exposed Nazis hoped for a quick fall of the city in order to escape a fight that no longer made sense. The more realistic among them killed their families and themselves.

And there were those who had welcomed the Allied bombers in the hope that the misery in their wake would lead to revolt. But the terror-machine of the Nazis proved to be stronger than the despair of the people. The atomization of the masses was sufficiently advanced to allow

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the organized terroristic minority to control all situations. But with the Russians at the gates of Berlin, defeatism became more widespread. With the Russians within the city, revolt became possible. But the Russians were not interested; they did not look for help but for loot.

The loot had been promised to the Russian troops—mostly made up of Mongolians—as the price for taking the city. The women were among the spoils. Despite the disaffection within the German ranks, the fight for Berlin took longer than was expected, the Russian losses were greater than contemplated. The barbarism of the Russian troops is now excused by the ferocity of the Nazi defense that enranged the Russian soldiers. Their rage, it is explained, could not be controlled; it took some time before the Commissars were able to bring order into the chaos and deprive the individual soldier of his right to rape, steal, and kill, in favor of the systematic expropriation executed by the army in the name of the state.

The Nazi stalwarts had the choice of dying fighting or committing suicide. They found it easier to get killed. They hated the Russians and they had no love for the Germans. Whoever was not with them in this last battle was their enemy. Unwilling adolescents and feeble old men were forced into the *Volkssturm*. Those who could not handle a gun, or manipulate a hand-grenade, were kept busy building barricades. Refusal to work or to fight led to immediate execution. Everywhere the defeatists were hanging on the lantern posts. Attempts to cut them down were again punished by death.

The luck of battle shifted from day to day, sometimes from hour to hour. The unwilling soldiers of the *Volkssturm* threw their guns away as soon as the Russians entered their street, only to pick them up again when they were driven back. They would be killed either way: by the Russians if found with a weapon in their hands, by the Nazis if found without their guns. But in the final stages of the battle more and more Germans joined the Russians in the hunting down and killing of the Nazis. They tore down the barricades they had erected to slow the Russian advance. They helped take care of snipers. They recognized the Nazis who had shed their uniforms, and destroyed them. They improvised red flags, reorganized the Communist Party, occupied the apartments of Nazi party-members, plundered and killed on their own account.

However, the Russians refused to distinguish between Nazis and anti-Nazis; all Germans were fascists and capitalists. They even outlawed their own German Communist Party, only to allow its legal reorganization at a much later date—with the arrival of Wilhelm Piek

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and his Moscow-picked retinue—so as to have an additional weapon of control. It would not do in May 1945 to offer a Russian soldier a brotherly embrace. He needed just to see the "luxury" of a radio, watch, or couch to be convinced that he was not dealing with a Tovarisch but with a capitalist. At any rate, as he was out to loot, he was not interested in probing the personal history and social position of his victim.

The rape of Berlin was not the aftermath of the struggle but part of it. The fight was less a military affair than a gigantic raid of a million-fold army of bandits. Even the appearance of the Russian soldiers ceased to be military; they discarded filthy and torn parts of their uniforms for German civilian clothes. They wore two and three suits under the military blouses and pants. Hardly able to walk, they advanced from street to street, tommy-gun in one hand and a suitcase of loot in the other. The bayonet broke open closets and drawers; what was removable was taken, only to be lost again to the Commissars who organized the eastward track of the previously westward Nazi caravans of plunder.

In great demand, of course, were things that could be carried on the body, such as watches and jewelry of all descriptions. As the victory must be celebrated, schnapps and vodka were also in great demand. Every bottle of vinegar was opened and tasted before the Russians accepted their possessors' protestation that they contained no alcohol. And with the schnapps the fighting and thievery gained in élan. Those who could not deliver quickly enough were shot down; women, not willing to give in at once, were thrown out of the windows with their throats slit. Fires were set to the houses that yielded too little, their occupants fleeing the basements into the deadly cross-fires of the streets.

During the battle, the interval between life and death is the occasion for love. Stopped for days at a particular spot, there was time for enjoyment before the sniper's bullet found its mark. Women and girls dragged from their basements were lined up on the sidewalks. They tried to make themselves appear old and ugly by smearing their faces with soot and by dirtying the shabby rags they wore in the cellars. But a soldier's hand would wipe away the filth and discover good looks behind the mask of fear. Children would follow their mothers and sisters, only to see them ordered to bend over and lift their skirts to make ready for love in daylight and collectivity, to be loved by drunken soldiers still able, however, to keep an eye on the rooftops so as not to be killed in the act of copulation. Long afterwards, the smaller of the children would play the newly-learned "game of raping."

The end of the battle is the start of the clean-up period. Groups of

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Russians began looking for strayed German soldiers; systematically, house by house, block by block. Nights, they returned to be rewarded for their day's troubles. The dead women, sprawling on the streets with their throats cut from ear to ear, served as a terrible reminder not to refuse the victors. The soldiers took what they found, regardless of age. Years without furloughs, years of war and nothing but war, had given them a great and indiscriminate appetite. Lucky the woman who aroused the fancy of an officer who would take charge of her and thus protect her from the mob. For others there was just the command "stay down . . . . comrade comes." It was like in an army brothel; only the experience was missing, and the husband looked on, and the children were not spared. And there was always the fear of death. If the lights suddenly went out, the Russian might start shooting. If the lights suddenly went on, he might also shoot, always suspicious of being trapped, of being tricked, of being surprised by a god-damned German swine.

Of course there are also other stories; stories of the kind Russian soldier who stopped in his fight just to help an old lady cross the street. Stories of the crying Russian soldier killing an old couple to end their useless and hopeless misery. Of the baby-lover, forcing a can of milk down the throat of a terrified child. Of those that took from one German to give to another. Of the Commissar killing the rapist on the spot, and the officer belaboring the plunderer with his saber. No doubt, these stories are as true as the cruel ones. But the unpredictability of the Russians' behavior merely increased the fear. Life and death depended on their caprices; it gave the terror a particularly bitter flavor. And when all is said, there remains the fact that within two months Berlin was thoroughly plundered. What was not securely hidden had been taken, most of the women had been mishandled, and the majority of the population had been reduced to paupers.

II

Apparently it was true that the soldiers had lost their discipline. Long after the battle searching parties continued to look in the basements and ruins. They looked no longer for Nazis but for Russians. And they have been looking for deserters ever since; most of the *Razzias* that take place in Berlin have as their first objective the hunt for former Russian soldiers. Troops were shifted, the Mongolians retreated to the hinterland; new soldiers arrived. Too late for the great show they were now forced to buy their women with bread and their bicycles with worthless vouchers and German Marks they had picked up in banks and post-offices.

IIII

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But the troops were still living with the Germans. What kind of people were these Russians? Had they been so totally demoralized by years of campaigning, that they forgot all the so-called civilized ways of behavior? Or did they come from Russian regions so backward that any comparison with Western standards was at once unfair and impossible? With surprise and contempt the Berliners watched the attempts of Russian soldiers to drill a hole in the wall in the hope that it would spout water just as the faucet did over the kitchen sink. They were amazed by the readiness of the Russian soldier to exchange an expensive wrist-watch for any old alarm clock just because it was so much bigger. They were disgusted to see their living-room changed into a butcher-shop as the Russians dragged animals up the stairs to be killed on the carpet. They did not understand their persistence of using the bathtub for a toilet and the toilet for washing their faces. They could not help laughing over the disappointment of the Russian who washed his potatoes in the toilet-bowl only to see them disappear as he pulled the lever. They saw with regret the wrecked automobiles and bicycles littering the streets, demonstrating the Russians' great love and little aptitude for things mechanical. They learned to know the Russian's great fear of his superiors: to make a misbehaving soldier run, it was only necessary to shout "Commissar" at the top of one's lungs. They witnessed Russian soldiers marched off to prison, heavy ropes around their bodies, the point of the bayonet between their shoulder blades, like in an old war-picture of a hundred years back. They experienced day by day the wide gulf that still separates the East from the West, as yet unbridgeable by any ideology, crossable only by armed forces, and haphazardly kept together by the permanence of terror.

Order was re-established in Berlin. Russian soldiers had been buried where they had fallen, on the sidewalks, in the center of the streets. Their graves had been lovingly cared for. Little white fences had been placed around them. Flowers, and often the picture of the deceased, were planted on the heap of earth covering them. Their remains were now dug out to restore the streets to their original function, and were placed into mass-graves at more appropriate places. Barriers were placed on every important street corner. Smart Russian women in uniform, white gloves, their bosom pushed up to the neck, regulated traffic by lifting or lowering toll-bars for vehicles and individuals alike. Like other regulations modeled on the Russian village, these traffic disturbances disappeared with the entry of the Allied troops.

With order restored, pillage was now directed from headquarters. The factories lost their machinery, the warehouses all they contained.

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Even the tracks of the city railway were removed, but had to be brought back at a later date. The street-cars were moved to Russia. The Germans repaired previously discarded ones; but they, too, were taken. Only the oldest, most dilapidated ones were left to Berlin.

With the entering of the Allied troops about half of Berlin was freed of the Russians. The expropriations were legalized, the removals were now being called reparations. The Russian troops moved into barracks and bunkers formerly housing German troops. Their uniforms seemed cleaner and they began to let their hair grow. But the more well-mannered they became, the less could be seen of them. Their isolation is not complete, of course; they can still be observed guarding the factories and offices that work for them. They have their parades and patrols and also their time off. They still plant their machine-guns on railway stations to check the papers of all who pass. But there is no longer that one-sided "fraternization" of the first months of the occupation.

III

Russia has lost in Germany, most certainly in Berlin, notwithstanding all the apparent "good will" the people show toward the Socialist Unity Party, Russia's German instrument. It is not propaganda, nor a stubborn refusal to be disillusioned, which explains some of the Berliners' "enthusiasm" for Russia's German policy. Behind the "enthusiasm" hides fear, which is kept alive by an invisible terror that may at any day come into the open.

On May Day 1948 there were nearly three-quarters of a million people in the *Lustgarten* demonstration called by the Russian-sponsored Socialist Unity Party. Apparently more than the number of those who attended the Socialist demonstration at the Reichstag building. Only two Russians in mufti, and one in uniform, shared the tribune with Piek and his staff. Few Russians were seen along the route. The slogans were all related to imagined German needs, and against the Marshall Plan. Hour by hour the demonstrators passed the reviewing stand. Their shoutings, however, had no spontaneity, but were directed by groups of claques near the loudspeaker-system. The Communist-controlled Berlin police formed part of the demonstration and received the loudest applause. Over and over again the loudspeakers burst forth with "Long live the German people's police." The Moscow-trained former Nazi officer, Markgraf, at that time Berlin's sole police president, smiled down to the masses, coquettishly waving a red carnation or clicking his heels in an earnest salute. Berlin's love for the police and the love of the police for the Berliners seemed boundless and all-embracing.

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The shabby clothes, torn shoes, and hungry faces of the demonstrators made them appear like an army of desperate beggars, out to invade the reservoirs of the rich. But they yelled for the police, for the often-felt rubber truncheons, for the deadly order of the party-state. Did the bottle of schnapps they received this morning go to their heads? Of course not, for it was sold at once to the black market. The schnapps was not a present but cost more than a weekly wage; by selling it they realized a profit big enough to buy four loaves of bread. Maybe the sight of the large brown sausages sold at various booths near the marching-route made them love the world and all it contained? But taking the sausage meant to part with precious ration-coupons and to face a meatless month. No, the enthusiasm for the police, for the Communist Party, for Russia, was not the result of bribery; it was given absolutely free, it came from the heart, a heart obsessed by fear.

The manipulated demonstrations of the "people's will" are organized through a malignant net of organizations. It is not up to the individual to decide whether or not to go. With others he is assembled at the place of work or at his living-quarters. His trade-union functionary, factory-representative, party-comrade, or house-warden, will know if he missed the call, if he stayed away deliberately; and he may be reprimanded or reported. Reported to whom? That's just it. Under the Nazis it was clear, but now one doesn't really know. However, if the Russians should become the absolute rulers, it may be expected that a bad record or a deficiency of enthusiasm will reach the files of a new Gestapo. It is better to play safe, to act and talk as is expected, or not to talk, just nod, and follow the functionary.

Communist Party trustees, backed by the Red Army, control factories still working, supervise all available jobs whatever their nature, control the cooperatives and the municipal offices. Although rations are small they must be bought. To live, one must work, even if most work is of the make-believe kind. Some jobs qualify for ration-card Two, others for ration-card Three, the most important jobs, as evaluated by the Russian occupiers, for ration-card One. To get a ration-card a work-card is needed. To keep the work-card, one must not oppose the policy and ideology of the Socialist Unity Party.

In opposition to the planned installation of a Western German government the Party called for a German referendum on the question of national unity. That no one is against unity is clear, though there may be some who do not care to show concern. That this is not a German question at all is also clear. What will happen in Germany and Berlin depends on the conflicts or agreements, between the great competing

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powers. Nevertheless, the propaganda offices are busy on both sides and the referendum is part of the Russian program. And then it starts: —The house-warden knocks on the door: "Have you added your name to the list for the referendum?" He comes back next day with the same question, and the day thereafter. The question is asked at street corners, at the grocer's, in the factories and offices, everywhere, by a great number of unpaid functionaries in search of ration-card One, until everybody feels sure that he is watched, that his indifference will not remain unnoticed. The list of names demanding the referendum may be kept, checked, and gone over again, as soon as the Allied powers have left, on the day of reckoning when the unreliables are purged. Anyhow, it is not difficult to sign a name, and thus they sign—just in case.

Of course nobody is fooled by these expressions of the people's will. The Party is not gauging its ideological success but the amount of fear it has been able to inspire. By means of the referendum, demonstrations, elections, declarations of all sorts, it measures the degree of its power over the people. It knows that ideological control is of small importance in an age which has devaluated all ideologies, where ideologies are merely labels for the controlling powers of one or another set of politicians who base their rule not on ideas but on an effective organization of terror.

Life in the Russian sector begins to resemble life under Nazi rule, including the arrests and disappearances of oppositionists in nightly raids. Although as yet without uniform and with restricted authority, a red "SS" is in formation. Discipline and the leader principle are stressed, the party hierarchy and its system of privileges has returned. With the division of the people into ration-card categories an inexpensive army of functionaries and storm-troopers has been created. Being in possession of a number One ration-card means to keep on living; outside this category there is only slow starvation. The struggle for existence is a fight for the proper ration-card, for the privilege of being used as policeman, propagandist, informer, or executioner by the masters of the party-machine.

Russian expansion is based not on consent but on force. It is a military and police affair exclusively, notwithstanding all the doctrinaire concern with ideological issues, for these, too, perform police functions, leading, as they do, to the early discovery of deviations and nascent opposition. It is not the change in the economic structure the Russians may introduce in Germany that causes concern, but the political-social structure of their party-state. For the Berliners the "Iron Curtain" hides no secrets. They have traveled across it, their relatives are living there, visiting them from time to time, either legally or illegally. Uncensored

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letters reach Berlin. They know that the conditions in city and country do not differ from the miserable conditions in the Western Zones, that Berlin merely reflects the whole of the territory that was once Germany. Furthermore, some of them have been with the Nazi armies in Russia, some returned as prisoners of war, looking like the inmates of Belsen and Buchenwald in their last stages of development. Local experiences are not their only criteria. But because of these experiences all that is Russian takes on a particularly sinister character.

The immediate situation, however, calls for duplicity. As long as there is a chance to pledge allegiance to the West, the chance is taken in the illusory hope that this may influence the decision of the Western powers to stay in Berlin. Simultaneously, the Russians are supported wherever necessary, in order not to arouse their wrath, in case the city should be theirs completely. As there are no escapes for the masses, their attitudes change with their masters. Democratic Berlin will be even more "democratic" as soon as the basis for its current democracy—four power competition—is removed. Meanwhile, people can do no more than bewail their reluctance to follow suit at the first great exodus to the Western zones, at the earliest rumors of a possible Berlin crisis. Now they are trapped, to be sold out if so convenient, or to be used in a kind of test-case for the larger issues at stake. Those who do not live by politics will prefer to do as they are told, no matter who does the telling. The Western-oriented politicians will, at best, become refugees. In their majority they will probably crowd still more the already crowded Russian concentration camps. In any case, German preferences do not count; the present flood of brave slogans about the Berliners' valiant refusal to bow to the new dictatorship is only silly, facing, as Berlin does, an army judged able, in case of war, of overrunning the whole of Germany within a few days.

IV

The political issues that seemingly agitate the Berliners only indicate their own impotence. Their interest in politics is waning. They would, no doubt, support any power, and any cause, in exchange for bread and security. They would even try to forget their early experiences with the Russians. But no bread and no security is forthcoming. It is the obvious poverty of the Russians, their strange primitiveness, their crude terroristic methods, their inability to give, and their need to take where hardly anything is left to take, that makes the Germans prefer the West. Even if nothing is to be expected from either side, still there is a greater familiarity with the Western world. There is also the strong

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suspicion that the Bolshevik colossus rests upon feet of clay and that, notwithstanding possible initial successes, it would not last in a prolonged war. It is not so much hunger for revenge, as the desire to escape the camp of the defeated, which motivates the German sympathies—such as they are—for the West.

However, no real turn to the West is possible. Victors behave as such; even where no great gains can be realized the victorious gestures will be maintained. These gestures alone confront the Berliners, removed as they are from the bargain-counter of international diplomacy, where special claims historically and otherwise, are framed in terms of coal and iron. France's anxiety over a possible German revival is not shared by her occupation troops, who recognize its baselessness merely by looking around. No fear-determined brutality accompanies their rule. Only the French officer behaves as arrogantly in Berlin as did the Nazi officer in Paris. And in the French desire to demonstrate their superiority the Germans may recognize their own behavior of better days. It is not a wise girl who refuses a French soldier a dance in the Amusement Park; she may very well get her face slapped. One must be careful in the use of one's language when facing the French interrogator, since a real or imagined lack of respect may lead to painful consequences. In general, however, the French behave toward the Germans in Berlin as they would if they met them in Paris. In their persistent enmity they are like all the other Western people who endured the Nazi occupation. Apparently, they are not as yet finished with the war and their previously suffered humiliation still looks for compensation.

Only the British soldiers attempt to make themselves inconspicuous, provided they are sober, and so long as they are on their own. But they are forced to do a lot of marching and shouting. Their officers stick to themselves in Germany as once in India. Barbed wire around their compounds, toll-gates, and many guards secure their isolation. They bring their wives and children to Berlin and live their English-way-of-life as if they were at home. The privates turn to German girls, which brings them into contact with the population. They are no longer feared but envied for their better food and happier outlook.

The presence of the French and British is largely ignored, however, as it is clear that only two great powers determine Berlin's status. America means many things to the Berliners. It means relatives and friendly organizations that send food and clothing. It means coffee and cigarettes on the black market. It means work and sales. It means a hamburger with a G.I. in the *Titania Palast*, and well-filled garbage cans for the scavengers. For some it provides the unfounded hope for social

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solidarity and for a turn away from the present trend of totalitarianism and war. For others it means effective opposition to the East and the certainty of war. For most, however, America is only the other side of the coin which, however thrown and however it will fall, spells doom for Europe in general and for Berlin in particular.

Although deeply involved in Germany and Berlin, the occupation army knows how to keep its distance from the defeated. The isolation of the Americans is perhaps even more complete than that of the British. They live their American-way-of-life in heavily guarded compounds, comprising large territories in pleasant natural settings. They have their own churches, schools, and kindergartens; their own movies, concerts, lectures, restaurants and stores. No German foot is to set there, except on missions of service. As distinct from the British, no program of austerity interferes with the Americans' pleasures. All less desirable activities are performed by Germans; Polish guards watch over them, their unbombed quarters are inaccessible to all but those with proper papers. Security has been developed both into a great art and a great science. To judge by the weapons displayed and by the red tape employed, the life of each American seems to be in constant danger. Even the *Fräuleins* need a "social pass" attesting to their physical health, which was in former times required only of prostitutes. From another view, however, all this isolation seems not at all queer, for it corresponds to the division of rich and poor that sets up barriers everywhere. The Americans in Berlin may be looked upon as a kind of new bourgeoisie, more sharply divided from the slum-dwellers than the bourgeoisie of old.

Of course, business closes the gap; the coffee from the States must be sold, valuables which escaped the Russians must be bought, and the requirements of the elevated social position demand a great amount of German labor. But work is fantastically cheap. Prior to the currency reform the weekly pay for any category of work did not exceed the German Mark equivalent of ten American cigarettes, that is four cents, as the P.X. sells the carton for eighty cents.

Nevertheless, the U.S.A. feeds part of Berlin. The Americans never tire of pointing to their deliveries and to the fact that they themselves manage without German-produced foods. Like the nation as a whole, so her citizens separately feel like philanthropists, the more to be admired since it is the former enemy they benefit. The hungry beggars have no choice but to be grateful, and their excessive submissiveness supports the conqueror's illusion of generosity. But there is no love for the Americans. The block-busters are not forgotten. The Americans are preferred because of the crumbs that fall from their tables and because they are busi-

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nesslike people. They buy where others steal, they sell where others give. And even if the end-result—absolute impoverishment and complete exploitation—should be the same, the process to this end, in terms of personal experiences, seems not as terrible as the lawless past.

American generosity brings a bitter smile to the lips of the Berliner. He knows quite well what his rations are, and he knows the black market prices. His bitterness on this point, however, does not differ from his feelings toward his own countrymen, the farmer for instance, or toward the Displaced Persons and the Western businessmen who are engaged in black market activities. He cannot find any satisfaction in the thought that the black market must find its end as soon as Germany is emptied of all the valuables that still command a price on the world-market, for he needs the black market and is by necessity a part of it. The temporary black market depression in the wake of the currency-reform did not help the Berliners much, as the "cold war" prevented them from profiting by the farmers' and store-keepers' new confidence in the freshly printed money.

The smile released by the propaganda for Democracy, however, has no bitterness at all. It can even turn into a hearty laugh if the question of the re-education of the Germans is raised. It is understood, to be sure, that an army is exempt from democracy, otherwise it could not be an army, and that an occupation army in particular cannot serve a lesson in democracy. It is rather the propaganda in newspaper, news-reel, and radio, that is found so amusing. Every word uttered in favor of democracy is at once contradicted by the facts of life. It is not the Nazi education of the past, having lost its dubious meaning long before the occupation, which explains the Berliners' obvious reluctance to take the dealers in democracy seriously; it is the close resemblance of their present life to that under the Nazi dictatorship. Of course they are supposed to pay for their sins of the past before being allowed to enjoy the fullness of the democratic life. The propaganda merely contains the promise of rewards for present-day good behavior, just as the flesh-pots of the Nazis had to be earned first by countless sacrifices and terrible suffering. But for too long the Berliners have lived on promises, and no longer do they trust in words. They are not cynical and disillusioned, as the observers say; they are merely sick of phrases totally unrelated to their actual situation. They do not see a choice between democracy and dictatorship but merely hope for the lowest possible degree of the terroristic rule of which they have had so much.

It is found increasingly difficult to oppose the Nazi observation that power alone determines who is to rule and live, and who is to be ruled

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and destroyed. The anti-Nazi cannot help feeling that authoritarianism has survived the Nazi rule and that the difference between oppressor and liberator is rather small. Hate and disgust grows, and dissipates into despair. It cannot lead to a revival of nationalism, as the material base for the latter has been bombed away. To get out of the country, rather than to revive it, is the dream of its ambitious people. They are no longer able, however, to feel embarrassment over the long Nazi dictatorship, and they no longer brood over the atrocities committed. They have grown cold to all but their own misery; and to tell them, as is often done, that they "only got what they were asking for," causes no anger but only tired gestures of resignation. Whatever they were and whatever they have done, just now they only desire to live and to be left alone.

V

The desire to be left alone has nothing to do with the current issues of self-government, national unity, Western federation, constitutions, or the color of flags. It simply means to be left out of all activities concerned with such matters. It is the desire to escape the manipulations of politicians, profiteers, professional ideologists, and also the pressure of the enchanted minority defending traditional values. It is a vague longing for a new start, unaffected by the past, and an activity with no other issues than those of making bread and of eating it undisturbed. The desire is illusory but it indicates the prevailing state of mind. To be left alone implies also the wish to escape the war now in the making. The anti-war attitude is not based on theories but on direct experience in the bombed cities and on the battlefields of the world. They have learned to place life above all those considerations which are evoked in the justification of war. They are at any rate much too busy trying to keep alive, to be concerned with the larger problems of world politics. They do not really care about the changes of uniforms so long as they are able to use the night for sleep.

Sleep is important, undisturbed sleep of even greater importance, as the Berliners found out in the restless nights during the war. To go to bed with the careless assurance that they will rise again in the morning—this ordinary experience became the greatest desire of the bombed sleep walkers. To sleep without the constant fear of death meant more than victory or defeat. Sleep is not just the mind and body at rest, it shortens the days, it helps against the cold, it is a substitute for food, preserves energy, and is the hiding place of misery.

Food is another of the Berliners' great obsessions, and sleep overcomes it only partly and temporarily. The individual awake is the per-

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sonification of hunger. His mind is occupied with food and the question how to get it. All other thoughts are secondary and rather meaningless as long as the primary need remains unsatisfied. The rationed food is no problem. It is so little, and is sold at stable prices, so that anyone who works can pay for it. The only question it arouses is whether to eat it all at once or to distribute it over the larger part of the week. The answer depends on the individual's connections on the black market and on his ability to pay its prices.

The search for food goes on relentlessly, in and outside of Berlin. For food anything expendable will be exchanged. For a few pounds of potatoes great hardships are endured; hours of standing in line for a railway ticket; the brutal rush for a front place at the gate; the struggle for a place inside the train or even for hanging on its sides; the dodging of the police, and the long marches from farm to farm. Whoever cannot leave the city is busy visiting the grocery stores and black market centers so as not to be late for the last delivery of bread or butter. They are always on the run for food, always asking for information about food, always excited about food, always thinking in terms of food, and all the while hungry to the bones.

There are many types of hunger, and the Berliners have experienced them all. There is the hunger for specific commodities that disappear in times of war. There is the desire for a balanced and pleasant diet, instead of stuffing the belly with whatever is on hand. There were the rations during the Hitler regime, which were seldom sufficient, and became hunger rations toward the end of the war. And then came the absolute hunger with the collapse of the distribution system during the siege of Berlin. To survive this period meant to eat whatever was found on the streets, in the ruins, and during frantic searches in abandoned stores. Wounded horses were ripped apart as soon as they had fallen. Most of the people turned butchers; like ant-heaps they hovered over the carcasses. They hunted for dogs and cats, picking from the asphalt what was red and bloody, even the innards of men blown to bits by artillery fire. Only to live through this ordeal, to be alive when the war was over, to enjoy once more a normal life, and to eat as much as one liked.

But the hunger remained; it was now organized and categorized. Former class divisions lost their meaning before the food-commissions, only to have their illegal comeback on the black market. The law made new classifications in terms of ration-cards with different numbers of calories, dividing the population into groups that were to live and function, others that were to die off slowly, and still others destined to die quickly. The counting in calories may be good for the statistician and it

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may make easy the sociologist's comparative studies in living standards, but to the hungry it is merely the strangely expressed verdict determining their punishments down to the death-sentence. But the judges are not fair, the sentences are not clear. What does it mean, for instance, to speak of the calories of ten pounds of potatoes if half of them are inedible, or of the calory-content of one pound of sugar if half of it consists of an undefinable dust? What does the rationed meat mean, if week after week no meat at all reaches the market, or if it turns up in the form of ground intestines mixed with flour, or is substituted by a herring nobody knows how to fry for lack of fat?

Not even the highest ration covers human needs; it must be supplemented with black market food and self-raised garden products. All other categories are only names for various starvation levels. They not only create new classes but also split the families into feuding units. The permanence of hunger makes sharing impossible. All sociality disappears; everyone holds on to his own, or tries to hold on. Some eat their rations fast, others slowly; envy and hate develop merely by watching people eat. Some men ruin their health quickly so that their children may eat, others starve their wives and children to retain their own strength. Suspicion rules, extras are kept secret, food is eaten in hiding, dragged into a corner to be devoured in animal-fashion. People are nervous, ill-willed, ready to quarrel on the slightest pretext and more than often inclined to kill. Inequality within the setting of general want is the cruelest form of inequality, the most corrupting, the ugliest, and the most vicious method of control.

If there were a sign that the hunger might end it would lose half of its terror. But the many years of repeated disappointments extinguished all hope. Even if the situation should change suddenly, the people would not believe in its permanence. They would merely eat themselves sick, would hoard what they could not get down, accumulate enormous quantities of food; it would take a long time before food would cease to be an obsession. Abundance, however, occurs only in their dreams; the recalling of the far-off past seems like a fairy-tale of well being. Lucky are the children born into this misery. They do not know about other than the meager rations, the substitutes, the skimmed milk if any, and the black dry bread. They do not know about candies, chocolates and fruits, and often refuse these strange things if they are offered to them. The world of hunger, cold, and want is the only world they know about. With their toes blue in the sharp wind, they run about laughingly like other children. With their bare feet in wooden soles they play their games undisturbed. Their carefree attitude misleads the wellfed visitors

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to consider the claims of misery to be grossly exaggerated. The doctors know differently, of course; they measure, weigh, and keep records and offer proof that these children are not like other children, for they weigh less, grow to lesser heights, and die sooner when sick.

The older children are realists in the world of hunger. Their early life belonged to Adolf Hitler; no other ideas but those of the Nazis entered their minds. No one contradicted their childish empty talk. Theirs was the future—supposedly. And then all this collapsed. What was good became bad, what was once laudable was now cursed; if no one dared to oppose their childish arrogance, now no one seemed to care for them at all. They were either a burden, or a source for additional food, which they gathered by becoming smalltime operators on the black market. Some no longer had parents; others who had, no longer cared for them. They needed help which no one could provide; so they tried to help themselves and sometimes they succeeded.

Disregarding the ever-present propaganda for the prevention of diseases, girls look for soldiers. They have been raped, why shouldn't they sell? What is all this talk about morals anyway? Of course, syphilis is not worth a pack of cigarettes. But neither is it good to be healthy and hungry. All is a gamble anyway, the good often die quicker than the bad. There is no love and no romance, it is all business on the barter level. There is little prostitution in the old sense of the word although there are still prostitutes around the *Alexanderplatz*. If enough buyers were at hand, prostitution would be general. Sex is a way of getting food as good as any other, and often the only way. The escapades of wife and daughter in search of food are disregarded; love completely disarmed, faces hunger.

The adolescents are frightfully realistic about the new relationship of hunger and love, of existence and sociality. No values other than material ones arouse their interest. They are practitioners of the empty life. The immediate personal gain in terms of things—edible, usable—is their only concern. Narrow-minded, without scruples, they turn their cold egotistical eyes upon the world of rubble in search for plunder left by the plunderers of yesterday. And since so little is left their selfishness is miserly; not even toward themselves do they know generosity. They calculate, count, ration, hoard, to secure their mere existence in spite of everything and everybody.

Hunger shows; it drives the smiles from the faces and tightens the skin on the bones. The flesh turns yellowish-brown and eyes sink into their sockets. There is an irritated tired look in the eyes, and sadness and anger around the mouth. The backs are bent and the steps are unsure

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as if in hestitation before the grave. When hunger comes, it appears publicly only in its early stages and in some cases not at all. Permanent hunger makes one indifferent, even to the self. The hungry hide like wounded animals in their caves. Starvation is not a street-sight; it doesn't offer itself to curious visitors. The people on the streets, and particularly on the still comfortable streets, frequented by the even more comfortable visitors, are still struggling against starvation with all the weapons at their command. If they are hungry, they rush about not to get hungrier. They still care about their appearance, dress up, brush, wash and mend not to add moral humiliation to the physical dilemma. The starving rush no longer. They do not clutter the streets; they have no shoes to walk in and no reason to be seen. They stay at home, in their rooms, live in their beds, or in the wards of hospitals, apathetically awaiting either a miracle or death.

Their peaceful withering away is the triumph of the rationing system. It is always a minority that succumbs first, to make room for another minority, recruited from the large mass of people fighting for their place in the majority. But in the end the various minorities represent a previous majority. This prospect, however, only intensifies the struggle for life and gives the hunger-obsession first place in the minds of the obsessed.

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Irving Howe

THE SENTIMENTAL FELLOW-TRAVELING OF F. O. MATTHIESSEN

F. O. Matthiessen is one of the few literary intellectuals in America who, contrary to current fashion, have continued to engage in active politics. He identifies himself with "the cause of a people's democracy, whether at home or in China"; he has delivered a seconding speech for Henry Wallace at the Progressive Party's Philadelphia convention; and his most recent book,* an account of a six months' teaching-assignment in eastern Europe, is essentially a statement of his attitude to European Stalinism and to the Wallace movement in America. Since he is probably the most distinguished literary fellow-traveler in this country, his political writings acquire an uncommon, quite symptomatic interest.

Even the mildly knowing reader should have no difficulty in recognizing the atmospheric touches in Matthiessen's new book. Here, once again, is the slightly sad, slightly ridiculous eagerness to sidle up to "the people" (he meets "guys" and "cookies"); the synthetic appeal of the foreign correspondent stricken with a sense of history (" . . . . we didn't know when we would meet again. It might be in America. It might be never"); the pulpy *schwärmerei* of progressivist festivity (" . . . . we had a keg of beer on the terrace and eased gradually into an evening of songs . . . . 'Roll out the Barrel' and 'Joe Hill' and at one gay moment . . . . the 'Internationale' led by Alfred Kazin"—and sung with a gang of future culture commissars); and that falsely-charged prose style of the fellow-traveler atremble before the glories of the "new world"—a style that might be called *vibrato intime*. If nothing else, Matthiessen's book is classic evidence of how a usually sober sensibility can be victimized by dubious politics; all too often one feels that one is reading, not a literary critic, but that bashful master of English prose who ghosts Henry Wallace's speeches.

* *From the Heart of Europe*, F. O. Matthiessen, Oxford University Press, $3.50.

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As a political thinker, Matthiessen is sentimental and befuddled, but not naive. This distinction, I shall try to show, is of some importance.

Matthiessen is not at all uncritical of Stalinist Russia. He recognizes the "dictator's corruptions of the communist ideal," admits that "the Soviet State takes the position . . . . that thought can be dangerous" and grants that "much of its practice may have been brutalized." Gently, he warns the Stalin regime that censorship is "bad for morale." Yet *"it knows what it wants"* and "still points towards a goal that gives the dispossessed their only hope." For "the Russians . . . . have not been deflected from the right of all to share in the common wealth." (my emphasis—I. H.)

One may perhaps wonder: If Russian society is brutal and corrupt, how can it offer hope to the dispossessed? Is not brutality and corruption always directed, by definition, against the dispossessed? Why, again, should a radical intellectual worry about the morale of a state which considers thought dangerous? I should think that the worse the morale in that sort of state, the happier we should be, for low morale is often the only possible form of rebellion in a totalitarian society.

Matthiessen's praise of the Russians for recognizing "the right of all to share in the common wealth" is a priceless instance of how the progressivist mind can entangle itself in a semantic coil. Any freshman could inform Matthiessen that this "right" must, of necessity, be recognized by all societies if they are not to be depopulated; what distinguishes one kind of society from another is the way in which "common wealth" is produced and shared. Unless Matthiessen thinks he is saying that the "common wealth" is shared more equitably in Russia than elsewhere, in which case he would have to say at least a few words about its wage differentials and rigid social castes, he is really saying nothing at all. Which, in fact, is usually true of progressivist rhetoric.

In any case, these quotations should indicate that, no matter what he believes, or imagines himself saying, Matthiessen cares little for democratic values or the libertarian bias of democratic socialism. Like Henry Wallace, he acquiesces in the absurd distinction between "political democracy" and "economic democracy"—as if there could be any sort of economic freedom in a police state. He is impressed by the statification of industry in Russia, by comparison with which its dictatorship and brutality seem secondary to him.

Here is a crucial difference between a fellow-traveler like Matthiessen and the fellow-travelers of, say, a decade ago. The Stalinst sympathizers of the thirties were often naive and idealistic; they believed there was democracy of a sort in Russia; they would have been

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horrified at the accusations against Russia which Matthiessen blandly accepts as true; and as a result, if you could but once convince them that Russia is what Matthiessen admits it is, dictatorial and corrupt and brutal, then you might well have been able to break them away from Stalinism. But this will not do with Matthiessen: he disarms democratic criticism by granting its claims in advance and then disregarding its urgency. He does not seem to care.

Matthiessen's malady is simply that he suffers from an advanced case of calloused moral imagination. Here is a man who, considering himself a socialist, visits central Europe and never once thinks to inquire (to cite one random instance) if it is true that the Russians have thrown Social Democrats and other recalcitrant radicals into concentration camps in eastern Germany. Here is an intellectual who, in 1948, can write that "no one I have talked with envisages any act of aggression by Russia against Czechoslovakia," or that "the new (Czech) government was brought into existence by the people of Czechoslovakia themselves, not by the Russians," or that "President Benes supported Prime Minister Gottwald." It would be insulting to Matthiessen to suggest that these statements are the result of naïveté; nobody, absolutely nobody can be *that* naive anymore.

In the name of socialism Matthiessen is ready to acquiesce, does in fact acquiesce to the most brutal political behavior. That is why he can become so lyrical about the young Czech Stalinists whom he met, without once summoning enough moral curiosity to wonder how many dissidents and "deviators" they might have betrayed after their party seized power; that is why he can sit down to lunch with a scoundrel like Zdenek Fierlinger without wondering how many Social Democrats he had denounced as "Trotskyists."*

I have said that Matthiessen is calloused; yet the description would not be complete without adding that he is sentimental. If he lived in France, "I don't quite see how I could help being a Communist." Why a Communist in France and not in America? In France he attended a large Stalinist rally: "The impressive and heartening thing . . . . was the sense you could have, in that throng of almost a million men and women from all over France, of really being joined with a people's movement. . . . They were there to laugh . . . . to sing workers' songs and

* At the last free Congress of the Czech Social Democratic Party there was a violent dispute on whether to cooperate with the Stalinists. Fierlinger, leader of the pro-Stalinist wing of that party, denounced as "Trotskyists" those Social Democrats who wished to keep their party independent. One need not be particularly knowing in modern politics to realize that Fierlinger was in effect putting their names on a "purge" list.

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finally to listen to speeches. . . . " He adds that "one of my Socialist friends" warned him against "the Communists' indifference to the dignity of the individual." But Matthiessen does not even attempt to deal with this objection, to discover whether it is true or false. The teetering American intellectual succumbs to the large crowd, to the stirring songs and the fraternal laughter; he does not even report what the Stalinist leaders said at their rally—and what does it matter?; for the rally was large, and they sang songs and they laughed—he was with them, one of them—hurrah!—all comrades together, arm in arm—marching, marching. Where to, Mr. Matthiessen? Or is it enough that Russia "knows what it wants?"

Finally: Wallace. In his seconding speech at Philadelphia, Matthiessen spoke of Wallace's kinship to "Thomas Jefferson in the range of his humane interests and in his fearless devotion to principles." He placed Wallace "against the background of our agrarian and populist movements" and found in his thought influences of "Roger Williams, and Emerson, and William James."

By now the appeal to Jefferson is so hackneyed and absurd that even politicians are embarrassed when they use it. Matthiessen seems to work on the assumption, however, that in politics anything goes, even the oldest of all clichés. Thus, again, his comparison of Wallace with the populists. He must know that populism was an indigenous and spontaneous agrarian movement essentially democratic in its motivations and political control, while the Wallace movement, which has least support among farmers, is a completely contrived creature of Stalinism, so much so that it refused to endorse the mildest criticism of the Russian dictatorship. Or does he use such comparisons for mere rhetorical effect and without regard to their accuracy?

It would be a pity if Matthiessen's literary colleagues and audience were to allow his political stand to go unchallenged. At the Wallace convention he spoke as an outstanding intellectual—which was his privilege, provided that, in turn, he speak as a Wallace supporter to the intellectual community of which he is part. Let him tell us concretely which of Wallace's recent statements he thinks introduced "major principles into political discussion." Wallace's desire to cede Berlin to the Russians? Or his fantastic admission that he could not characterize the Communist Party because he, a candidate for President, had no knowledge of Communism? Or his numerous apologies for the Stalinist coups in eastern Europe? Let Matthiessen speak up on these matters; the audience which hears him out on literary subjects will unquestionably wish to receive

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his political views directly and, if possible, without hortatory references to Jefferson.

Here, then, is the political portrait of our outstanding literary fellow-traveler: a literary critic succumbing to the most abominable totalitarian movement of our time; a man of literary refinement insensitive to half a continent of victims and charmed by the pseudosocialist rhetoric of those who grind these victims; an American intellectual who would join the French Communist Party because it is large but not the American Communist Party which is small, even though their aims are identical; a writer who calls himself a democratic socialist while apologizing for the regimes that have jailed, exiled, and murdered democratic socialists.

Is this too harsh, too fractious? Will some judicious souls cry "Stalinophobia"? Does it offend genteel sensibilities ready to become violently partisan about questions relating to the structure of poetry but indifferent to Stalinism as a bogey that frightens only New York intellectuals?

I would only record the fact that as I read Matthiessen's book an uncontrolled fear arose within me, of a sort I had never known while reading outright Stalinists. For I could not help thinking of the thousands of European Matthiessens who, with the best will in the world, had helped bring about their own downfall; I could not help thinking that if some of us ever end our days in a "corrective labor camp" it might well be because of the equally good intentions of intellectuals like F. O. Matthiessen.

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BOOKS

FAULKNER AND THE SOUTH TODAY

INTRUDER IN THE DUST. By William Faulkner. Random House. $3.00.

There are probably very few novelists in America who have not in some depressed, sterile hour wished for Faulkner's madness. He is authentically, romantically possessed by his genius; he can lose himself not only in the act of writing but in the world his imagination has created and populated. He believes all of it, concretely, amazingly: the map of Yoknapatawpha County is not a joke. Here is a man who can take a walk in the morning and point to the spot where Wash Jones killed Sutpen or visit Compson's Mile for which Jason I swapped Ikkemotubbe a race horse. And he is so beautifully our young writer's image of the artist: he has done it by himself, in solitude, far from New York, in spite of critics, little magazines, fads, and professors—our natural genius, isolated, sure of himself, magnificently hallucinated as we feel the artist ought to be. And what a happy man he must have been, for what is there except the furious ecstasy of art's triumph over the artist's life in his extraordinary recent comments on the characters in *The Sound and the Fury*? He tells us that Candace, the heroine of a novel published in 1929, has vanished in Paris with the German occupation in 1940, that she is still beautiful and does not show her age. He's mad, of course; we remind ourselves that there is no Candace, nor a Jason, after the pages of the book are closed, to live on into a sour middle age and to sneak up the steps with his "big, plain, brazenhaired" mistress from Memphis. Still we cannot help but envy a writer so splendidly deluded; we feel an irrevocable calling to art ought to give us indifference to reality, that creative work should heal the misery of an unhappy love affair, pull us through nervous breakdowns, discount personal deficiencies, and in that sense most artists strive desperately for the same fantastic identification with their work and characters, the wondrous involvement with the imagination which Faulkner's little map symbolizes with an accuracy and simplicity almost beyond credulity.

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For it is either this or the slow, painful workings of the mind; either Faulkner's madness, large and self-sufficient, his stunning belief in his imaginary world, or something we secretly believe to be smaller: autobiographies, social observation, the neat situation, "the interesting but not creative."

His limitations, his overwriting and obfuscation are apparent; it is easy enough, if reckless, for Clifton Fadiman to satirize one of his most dazzling works ("One may sum up both substance and style by saying that every person in *"Absalom, Absalom!"* comes to no good end, and they all take a hell of a time coming even that far."), or to be really dreary about him, as Maxwell Geismar is and hint at Fascism, the great "hatred," and the threat to the body politic in Faulkner's love of the past. But his six or seven superb novels insinuate themselves, no matter, and someone is always discovering that Faulkner is our greatest living novelist and saying it with a chip on his shoulder, belligerently, as though he expected to be booted out of the room. Indeed, Faulkner's reputation is curiously incomplete, somehow not authorized and catalogued. Like a patch of thrilling and famous scenery, almost everyone admires him but no one has anything very thrilling or famous to say about him.

One does not know whether to be glad or sorry that even Faulkner, the possessed, legendary writer, could not escape forever from the real Mississippi. His new novel, *Intruder in the Dust*, is astonishing: it is a tract, a polemic, even in its odd way a "novel of ideas." It is not what we expected and in it Faulkner appears as a hermit, perfect and necessary to our urban sentiments, who by chance picked up yesterday's newspaper, became annoyed with the state of the world and ran down from the hills to make a speech in the public square. It is less than his previous work, but fascinating because of that work and because it reveals the desperation of his present condition, the possibility that his inspired madness has disintegrated, leaving him, like everyone else, hollow and uncertain with the sickness and perplexity not of the past but of the present. The sickness of *Intruder in the Dust*, the fear and despair, are intimately connected with the future of Faulkner's career, a career which demands that there be a South, not just a geographical section and an accent, but a reasonably autonomous unit, a kind of family ready, and even with a measure of geniality, to admit the existence of the people next door and to cooperate in the necessary civic responsibilities, such as the removal of garbage and the maintenance of highways, but beyond that unique and separate, not to be reproached, advised, or mourned for the goings on behind the door.

The bare situation of the novel is brilliant: an old Negro, Lucas

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Beauchamp, a man apart, "not arrogant, not scornful, just intractable and composed," *pretends* to be a murderer, wants to be innocently lynched, to add his own blood to the South's dishonor, as his last act of contempt for his oppressors. He is not successful because of the intense need of several white people to prevent his martyrdom, and not only in Lucas' private interest, but in their own interest as white men who already have more shame than they can bear. Lucas, or the mass Negro, has at last conquered the South by giving the white man an unendurable burden of guilt. "Lucas Beauchamp once the slave of any white man within range of whose notice he happened to come, now tyrant over the whole country's white conscience."

The brilliance of this situation is that it is not so much about the Negro as about the South's appalled recognition of its sins, its confusion before the unforgiving, alienated faces of the Negroes whose suffering has given them immense pride and dignity, the moral superiority of the victim. The Negro must be saved, Faulkner seems to be saying, so that the white man can become his moral equal, be relieved of the bondage to his terrible mistake.

Lucas' innocence is proved by a sixteen year old boy, Charles Mallison. The boy had been haunted for years by his feeling that he was in debt to Lucas for having, as a child, eaten part of the old man's dinner. Lucas refused money for the dinner and when the boy sent a Christmas present he was immediately repaid by a gallon jar of molasses from Lucas. By proving the Negro's innocence, the boy hopes to reassert his position again, and again he is defeated, because Lucas puts his escape from death on a business basis, insists upon paying the boy's uncle, a lawyer, two dollars for services, and thereby repudiating the equalizing gesture. The Negro is triumphant: he will not allow the white man to reduce even a penny of the incalculable debt.

Seen through the boy's eyes this situation has great subtlety, in spite of the ludicrous improbability of some of Faulkner's inventions, which include vanishing corpses and graverobbing scenes more suitable to Tom Sawyer and Injun Joe than to the tragic momentum suggested here. And then suddenly the novel ceases to belong to the Negro and the boy and is given over to the boy's uncle, the lawyer who also wished to save Lucas. The uncle delivers absurd, strident lectures, written with frantic bad taste (the conglomerate Negro is called Sambo) and a flippant effort in the direction of political satire. The South must "defend not Lucas nor even the union of the United States but the United States from the outlanders North East and West who with the highest motives and intentions (let us say) are essaying to divide it at a time

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when no people dare risk division by using federal laws and federal police to abolish Lucas' shameful condition . . . ." and again, "I'm defending Sambo from . . . . the outlanders who will fling him decades back not merely into injustice but into grief and agony and violence too by forcing on us laws based on the idea that man's injustice to man can be abolished overnight by police . . . ." and, "I only say the injustice is ours, the South's. We must expiate and abolish it ourselves, alone and without help nor even (with thanks) advice."

Faulkner acknowledges the Negro's moral victory over the South, yields and desires his total civic equality ("Someday Lucas Beauchamp . . . . will vote anywhen and anywhere a white man can and send his children to the same schools anywhere the white man's children go and travel anywhere the white man does as the white man does it"), scorns as he always has the depraved Southern murderer, the Percy Grimm who killed and emasculated Joe Christmas, and whose portrait Faulkner has drawn with a passionate condemnation not achieved to my knowledge, by any other writer.

This perception of the final emancipation of the Negro is real and historical, a fact and a victory only Stalinists and certain liberals feel compelled to underestimate. The sadistic passion these people take in disowning every triumph of the Negro in America, in predicting greater and greater injustice to him, is one of the most detestable aberrations of their minds. One can only believe they want violence in order to prove themselves right, as the deluded maniac, faced with the infuriating reason of the doctor, wishes to have a great bloody wound the next day to testify to the actual existence of his imaginary attackers. And when the Negroes are won over to the Communist Party have they not fallen in love with their own misfortune, since at no time is there so much discussion of lynchings, humiliating segregation, such delicious examination of white deceitfulness as between Stalinists and Negroes? The one never tires of "exposing" to the other an endless chronicle of dangers past and to come, as if the Negro did not know them well enough but had to taste, touch, and fondle them over and over until both are in a frenzy of indescribable perversity.

Faulkner's best intuitions have something to do with this phenomenon and there is at least a measure of psychological truth in his understanding that a cruel, lost South is necessary to the idea of America held by certain radicals. This intuition partly informs his plea that the South be allowed to redeem itself. Unfortunately he was not content with psychological perceptions, but had to compose a states' rights, leave us alone, don't be coming down here and telling us what to do, pamphlet

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which falsifies and degrades his fine comprehension of the moral dilemma of the decent guilt-ridden Southerner.

I think he was compelled to this not alone by a compulsive love of the South but also by the fact that he has lost his belief in the South as a unique region; he can reaffirm that belief only by imagining a mystic separation from the North, since his will to justice does not want a South unique because of its brutality to Negroes. He must believe that the contemporary Southerner is still close to his history, still romantically doomed, unable to forget the old disgrace, a proud, driven, image of the past. "For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word. . . ."

But this is unimaginable; it is literary, flamboyant, historically ridiculous in terms of America today. And it is also inconceivable, that the citizens of a few states are actually prepared, as Faulkner suggests, to risk their lives, their children, their futures, their wealth, or even their time in any sustained, hopeless revolt against the will of the country to which they are tied and which they need as much as anyone else. This is romantic, cowboy play acting, the election of Talmadge, the hootings and posturings of the Dixiecrats notwithstanding. The rebel yell on the radio—an unmistakable scream of buffonery and self-mockery. It is the end, not the beginning, the end of Faulkner's imaginary kingdom and he is terrified by it.

The Negroes have migrated in vast numbers to the North and those who are left no longer feel tragically or gloriously fused with the destiny of the South. There are no Dilseys today, neither in the South nor in the North, neither black nor white, and Faulkner's immense, loving memorial to the Negro servant is not only a remarkable creative achievement but a contribution to social history, a painstaking study of a lost relationship which will appear, a few generations from now, as queer and archaic to the American as the role of a duenna. The white Southerner himself is ruled by the ambitions of the rest of the country which are all he can call upon if he is to survive and manage the American present.

Faulkner has caught up with the confusion of the country today,

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and with bitterness he finds that it cannot be controlled and ordered or even thought about in the intimate, vitalizing way in which he knew and used the past. The language of *Intruder in the Dust* is fatefully indicative of what has happened to him and his vision. Upon a realistic, contemporary situation he has tried hopelessly, impossibly, to impose the grandiloquent cadences of *"Absalom, Absalom!"* and nothing could be more out of key, more jarring and defeating. The rhetoric of that gloomy marvel cannot give epic grandeur, vast passionate design to his parable of the present. Here everything is real, small, and practical. What we hear, in spite of every effort to disguise it, is not the old Faulknerian music, but the sour stutters and complaints of a writer fretting over his new, urgent, difficult material.

Elizabeth Hardwick

RAW GENIUS, SELF-DELUSION, AND INCANTATION

HART CRANE. By Brom Weber. The Bodley Press. $2.75.

Mr. Weber has obviously studied the work and life of Hart Crane with a loving, intense, and intensive patience. As a collection of materials for the study of Crane his book is valuable. But there are many faults also: poor writing, poor thinking, and above all an inadequate knowledge of other kinds of poetry, a knowledge necessary to a precise definition of Crane's poetry.

Consider this representative passage from Crane's first book:

> *And I, entering, take up the stone*
> *As quiet as you can make a man. . . .*
> *In Bleecker Street, still trenchant in a void,*
> *Wounded by apprehensions out of speech,*
> *I hold it up against a disk of light—*
> *I, turning, turning on smoked forking spires*
> *The city's stubborn lives, desires.*

One can wonder for years about the third line, about what Crane meant by speaking of a street as trenchant in a void; and one can decide at last that he meant *intrenched.* Yet neither here nor elsewhere in Crane are we dealing with a simple misuse of words. Crane often began with a definite subject and at times he wrote fine descriptive poetry about that subject. But the dominant tendency in his work is to go beyond any meaningful statement to a kind of hallucination of meaning produced by the misuse of words. It is not merely that the meaning of the poem

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is obscure and can be tracked down, as in most good modern poetry; it is that the very concussion of false meanings produces an emotion of exaltation. And if this is the result of ignorance, it is also the result of an infatuation with language, a mastery of versification as such, and the true possession of certain emotions such as exaltation. When Crane seeks to force some insincere feeling into his words, the forcing and the falseness come through immediately. By comparing the passages of genuine emotion with those which are false, we can see how inexact it is to dismiss Crane's poetry as mere mystification: it had to be self-mystification first of all:

Whose counted smile of hours and days, suppose
I know as spectrum of the sea and pledge
Vastly now parting gulf on gulf of wings
Whose circles bridge, I know, (from palms to the severe
Chilled albatross's white immutability)
No stream of greater love advancing now
Than, singing, this mortality alone
Through clay aflow immortally to you.

Here again one can question the denotative meaning of every line. But the sympathetic reader can hardly miss the declaration of love which the words contain. Some strange and complicated feeling for the connotations of words has made possible this kind of poetry. It can be compared to incantation—"the use of spells or verbal charms, spoken or sung,"—and it can be compared to music (if one remembers that it is not the *sound* of the words so much as the associations of meaning which the words evoke that justify the musical comparison). But perhaps it should be unnecessary to say that this kind of poetry is an extreme made possible only by raw genius, ignorance, and self-delusion. Ignorance and self-delusion alone would not have sufficed, of course. But if this were the only kind of poetry most poetry would not be worth reading.

Delmore Schwartz

ADJUSTING HAMLET

HAMLET. By William Shakespeare. With a psycho-analytical study by Ernest Jones M.D. Funk & Wagnalls. $2.50.

There was an eighth-grade teacher who used to urge us to consider what Lady Macbeth would have been like if she had not married

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Macbeth. She would have been very admirable, we decided, and we came to feel that her unlucky marriage was the real point of the play. Now Dr. Ernest Jones, president of the international Psychoanalytical Society, whose famous study of *Hamlet* in the light of the Oedipus Complex has just been re-issued, takes similar liberties with Shakespeare. He treats characters as if they were people, and generally mistakes for the real thing the Shakespearean *illusion* of infinite human complexity. "The relationship with Ophelia never flowers because Hamlet's unconscious only partly desires her; in part Ophelia is felt to be a permitted substitute for the desired relationship with Laertes," says Dr. Jones; and although we know him as a devoted Freudian, he seems at this point to be talking like the Baron de Charlus.

Psychology, which has come to be an established science directed towards a recognized category of experience, was to Shakespeare a form of revelation, a flare in the darkness. He was capable of the maximum of such insight; yet what he often gives us is a scant minimum. Critics like Dr. Jones, heeding only the first of these propositions, have in their day fathered some monstrous theories, together with some indispensable insights; but their day has long been past. Shakespearean criticism is now firmly in the hands of historical scholars, the effect of whose researches into Elizabethan conditions has been to quite obscure the question of Shakespeare's originality. Many of the researches are valuable; and the scholars are themselves often persons of sensibility. If challenged they would doubtless agree that he was superior to his conditions, but they are seldom challenged. A professional myopia prevents them from seeing the large critical issues raised by their activities. Especially are they incapable of that refinement of the historical method which consists in noting the extent to which the history of literature and the history of society do *not* run parallel. And so they present us with a Shakespeare who was a creature of conventions, a good Elizabethan faithfully reflecting the realities of his theatre, the limitations of sixteenth century English, the judgments and ideas of what is called — and too often hypostasized as — the Elizabethan world-view. This criticism has long been the official criticism, praised as scientific, encouraged by the universities. It has not stopped with chastening the literary Shakespearean; it has practically driven him from the field. The recent existentialist study of *Hamlet,* by Wylie Sypher, was a forlorn gesture.

One tendency of the scholars has been to turn Shakespeare into an impeccable utilitarian. He was a Court Dramatist, says one of them, and *Hamlet* is to be understood in terms of the Court audience's response

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to the social functions embodied in the various characters. Hamlet is the Prince, Horatio the Poor Courtier, Ophelia the Good Daughter; and because Polonius is the Prime Minister, and such dignitaries were respected by Courts, Polonius is not a figure of fun and should not be so played by modern actors. Somewhat less fantastic is Lily B. Campbell's study of the tragedies in the light of Elizabethan mental science, a book known to all earnest Shakespeareans. The tragic heroes, Miss Campbell suggests, exhibits the symptoms of various disorders — grief, jealousy, anger in old age, *etc.* — as described in contemporary treatises on psychology. As a study of lore that Shakespeare undoubtedly knew and used, the book is engrossing. It has, however, often been taken as a positive aid to critical understanding; and Shakesphere becomes a kind of medical examiner filing reports in beautiful language. Of such books one's complaint is not that they are bad criticism but that they are inferior science: they fail to define their terms and purposes. Even E. M. W. Tillyard's important recent book on the chronicle plays exaggerates the value of the political ideology.

As Yeats wrote of the Victorian critics, ". . . . because every character was to be judged by efficiency in action, Shakespearean criticism became a vulgar worshipper of Success." This, as we see, is still the case, except that Shakespeare is now felt to have written from the standpoint not of the Good Victorian but of the Well-Adjusted Man, a very different conception. Let us grant the critics their changing standards. The great question is not how Shakespeare judged but whether he judged at all. To be sure, the plays *incorporate* judgments, judgement being a fact of experience. But are the plays to be equated with the judgments in them any more than Shakespeare is to be equated with his age? Yeats protested against such arithmetic. He said that Shakespeare watched "the procession of the world with that untroubled sympathy for men as they are, as apart from all they do and seem, which is the substance of tragic irony."

Really Shakespeare was less the victim of a *Zeitgeist* than are the scholars and Dr. Jones, representative moderns who insist on intruding into art that legitimate fiction of science, the well-adjusted individual. Otherwise Dr. Jones is as far from the scholars in method and intent as a buccaneer is from a public accountant. He is so innocent of historical knowledge that he can, for example, regard Hamlet's outbursts of bawdiness as peculiar to Hamlet, and so multiply inferences. By pointing out the element of family tension in the play he performs a service — a service which Freud's much subtler analyses have accomplished for art in general. Freud, moreover, usually avoided the error that Dr. Jones

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systematically commits, which is to dissolve the play into the myth on which it is based, to mistake the dramatic situation for the theme.

In particular, what Dr. Jones sets out to do is to solve the old riddle. Hamlet, we are told, hesitates to kill Claudius because to do so would be to risk becoming conscious of his own unacknowledged desire to possess his mother. This is admittedly speculation; the very nature of the theory precludes the finding of textual support. But is it convincing even as speculation? Given such a desire on Hamlet's part, and sanctioned by his father's ghost, he would seem to be in the best possible position to rid himself of his rival *without* having to face up to his unconscious. Why he delays "I do not know . . . . Sith I have cause and will and strength and means to do't." To add sexual rivalry to this imposing list of motives is only, in common sense, to deepen the mystery of his inaction.

I think there is a good deal of point to T. S. Eliot's remark that in *Hamlet* Shakespeare's images did not entirely encompass his meanings. But for those who cannot admit imperfections in *Hamlet,* there is a comforting theory — or anti-theory — supported by Mr. Hazleton Spencer and other historical scholars which calmly buries the aesthetic question. Mr. Spencer finds that *Hamlet* is not so much a drama of character as a well-written variant of the old melodramas of revenge. He agrees that in the other tragedies there is a palpable relation between being and doing, and that what a character says is usually a reliable clue to what he is. Yet he warns us not to expect the same clairvoyance of Hamlet. His rueful soliloquies are merely "elocutionary arias in the conventional vein of heroic avengers," and Hamlet himself is "ardent, masculine . . . . a gallant boy playing a lone hand for revenge and a throne against a great opponent." Mr. Spencer's Hamlet *is* a well-adjusted man.

F. W. Dupee

THE ART OF THE FILM

THE ART OF THE FILM. By Ernest Lindgren. Macmillan. $4.50.
CHAPLIN: LAST OF THE CLOWNS. By Parker Tyler. Vanguard. $3.00.

The Art of the Film is an expert's account of the possibilities of film technique, written to stimulate "film appreciation" through public enlightenment. The dust-jacket says that Mr. Lingdren has made a "special study" of film technique and appreciation, and the unaffected seriousness with which he pursues his educational aim may be seen in the

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book's glossary, which includes definitions of such terms as acetic acid, camera, censor, cinemagoer ("one who attends cinemas regularly"), film, studio, and writer ("technician who writes script of a film, or any part of it"). There are informative chapters on the separate aspects of film-making — photography, sound, music, etc. — and a few more general chapters, including a final one on the question of whether films can be art, which reaches the correct conclusion that they can but contributes nothing to the discussion. In spite of its pedestrianism — a common failing among English film critics, who have succeeded in making the films as legitimate an object of cultured interest as archaeology, penal reform, or bird-watching — the book is a useful compendium of information, and especially valuable for its emphasis on the film's development toward greater verisimilitude and on its character as a medium of communication.

But there is a basic error in the idea of "appreciation" itself, an idea that presupposes a homogeneous culture in which a progressive refinement of taste will lead almost automatically from bad art to good art. (This error, too, is characteristic of English intellectuals, who have not yet had to face the problem of middlebrow culture squarely — precisely because the general cultural level in England is so high.) It is more than the development of taste that leads one to prefer Kafka to Somerset Maugham; indeed, the cultivated taste left to itself is perhaps a little more likely to choose Maugham. And in the films, though it is obviously desirable to respond as fully as possible to the aesthetic complexities of technique, these "pure" values are at least equalled in importance by the medium's immense power of communication, which always raises aesthetic problems that go beyond the boundaries implied by the idea of "appreciation"; the film "connoisseur" tends to go wrong in so far as his concern with the "cinematic" causes him to ignore these problems. Mr. Lindgren protects himself by taking the values of middlebrow culture — the "human values," as he calls them — for granted; he can thus "appreciate" both Jean Vigo and Noel Coward. (In this country, where the problem presented by middlebrow culture is at its sharpest, the errors of serious film criticism are often extreme: one of the most sensitive of American critics has overvalued such trash as *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *Key Largo;* another critic, writing in one of the little magazines, has suggested that the films of Maya Deren are superior to Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* and Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible.* These are contrary errors, but they come from the same source: a refusal to acknowledge the essential *aesthetic* importance of film content.)

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Parker Tyler's book, a series of free associations revolving around the word "Chaplin," hardly falls within the realm of film criticism at all. Mr. Tyler puts the films to peculiarly personal uses that often lead him to brilliant flashes of insight, but in the present case he is handicapped by the independent brilliance of Chaplin himself, whose dominating presence makes Mr. Tyler's disorderly observations appear commonplace when not irrelevant.

Mr. Tyler's free-floating application of psychoanalysis has the effect of reducing the complexity of Chaplin's art to a mechanical structure in which every element can be translated into some simple "meaning." Thus the machine that swallows Chaplin in *Modern Times* becomes a womb; an incident in *The Gold Rush,* when a starving prospector imagines Chaplin is a chicken and chases him with a knife, becomes a "paradigm of the child's fear of the father-devourer"; in *Shoulder Arms,* when Chaplin pantomimes the stars and stripes in order to identify himself as American to a French girl, the stars and stripes together represent a bed, the star alone represents a vulva, the "straight-shooting stripe" represents a penis; a photograph of Chaplin impersonating a woman is labelled "identification with the love-object." And so on, until psychoanalysis in Mr. Tyler's hands ceases to be a method of investigating and describing a man's relations with reality but becomes a kind of "system" in itself, an arbitrary code of correspondences that one can *choose* to employ; the penis might just as well be a symbol for the stripe, and "identification with the love-object" is only a way of saying "Chaplin impersonating a woman."

Robert Warshow

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VARIETY

ALBERT CAMUS AND MODERATION

The publication of *The Plague* in America will probably be the occasion of much the same kind of argument about Camus' "message" as took place in France. The readers of PR may be interested in hearing something on the subject from Camus himself.

In France, after *The Plague* came out (and after a series of articles entitled *Neither Victims nor Executioners*), Albert Camus had to defend himself against the accusation of advocating non-violence, and of taking refuge from the present crisis in the myth of the "saint without God." Camus insisted on defending himself, because he dislikes very much having his words carried to some ultimate logical conclusion, and thrown back at him in the form of a dilemma. Far from aiming at stating dilemmas, Camus aims at the opposite, a consistent "neither/nor." He knows that this is a defensive form of argument, but he would be willing to maintain that today we are still in the phase of the "resistance," when one must defend a certain stability and normalcy of human existence against the catastrophic automatism of History.

To a Communist intellectual who insisted it was the writer's duty to wrest the (proletarian) victim from the (capitalist) executioner, and who accused Camus of shirking this task by remaining at an equal distance between the oppressed and the oppressor under pretext of condemning all violence, he replied that what he condemned was not *all* violence, but rather all "legitimation of violence, be the legitimation derived from an absolute *raison d'Etat* or from a totalitarian philosophy." "I detest those whose words go farther than their acts," added the author of *The Plague*. His target was a certain kind of intellectual, whom he called "the absolute rationalist," even more than the hangman, whose moral infamy is a matter of simple evidence. "If history today is so bloody," he said, "it is because the European intelligentsia has betrayed its heritage and its vocation, and by yielding to pathos and exaltation, has chosen hybris," the totalitarian perspectives of absolute rationalism, instead of remaining faithful to "the truth of the moment." The only question that makes sense today, insisted Camus in his polemic, is the question of what can be the meaning of an ideal whose realization would require another war. "I have asked myself this question, and I have come to the conclusion that I have

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no right to recommend anything except the struggle against war, and the very long effort required for the establishment of a true international democracy." And to the accusation that his was an intellectual's position, and one which objectively favored the bourgeois, Camus retorted: "We have come to an impasse in history where complicity is universal. You Communists not only do not escape this servitude, but you don't do anything in order to escape it. My only advantage is that, on my part, I shall have made such an effort, and pleaded, as was my duty as a writer, that the horrible sufferings of men be decreased, *right now.*"

To express his dislike of any form of Nietzschean *Amor Fati,* to make public his rejection of all extreme solutions; to take the risk of being called a "radical-socialist" (which, among French intellectuals, is not a compliment); to sympathize with Sartre's RDR as a way of not conforming to mass politics; to give his support to the idea of a European Federation and a World Parliament, these are things that Albert Camus is willing to do, in order to show that he does not shirk responsibility. But he won't go much farther. He doesn't see why he should.

In a private conversation, talking about *The Plague,* he said: "I wish I could get rid of the theme of the extreme situation. When I was a boy, my ambition was to

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write the story of a happy man. Even today, when I listen to Mozart, I can't help feeling that the ideal achievement for me would be to write the way Mozart composes. But the fact is that I have just written a play for Jean Louis Barrault, which is a variation on the theme of *The Plague,* and that I am writing another about Kaliaev, the terrorist who killed the Grand Duke Serge. After which, I tell myself, I shall write about happiness.

"The next moment, however, I wonder. We of the generation that has become mature from 1938 to 1945 have seen too many things. I don't mean too many horrors, but simply too many contradictory, irreconcilable things. We have become incapable of the natural stupidity without which, Pushkin said, one can't be a poet. We are full of ambiguities.

"I have some friends who have come back from concentration camps. They all claim that, except for this or that physiological trouble, they are perfectly normal now. Some of them insist that they don't even have dreams about the camps any longer. So we talk about literature, politics, current events, have discussions, and even quarrels, just like anybody else. Only, at certain moments in the course of certain arguments, I feel the presence of a limit that cannot be overcome, as in a conversation with old people. It is, I suppose, that while talking about this or that my friends cannot help thinking of 'something else.' I don't mean the camps, but all the paths their minds have explored, paths which remain closed to me. At such moments I know that all I can do is to keep my friends company, without deluding myself that we can really communicate with each other.

"We too, the men who are now around forty, have escaped from an experience that cannot really be communicated, and must remain ambiguous. We have all, to a greater or lesser extent, gone through what has come to be called "nihilism," the experience of the arbitrary. But we have also seen men transformed into brutes by the logic of an absurd power. Every time we are confronted with a proposition that implies such results, we revolt against it. When we hear naive hopes being expressed, however, we cannot help remembering that we have also had the experience of the amazing inadequacy of man, the ease with which he can be made to

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submit to the unnatural and the frightful, simply because, as a rule, he prizes the routine of ordinary existence above everything else. Since this is also the reason why man occasionally revolts against the inhuman, we can hardly blame him for being mediocre.

"Such an experience makes participation in politics rather difficult. I, for one, feel constantly uneasy about it. I have been called a sentimentalist. It's true. I was a journalist because, when I got up in the morning and read the paper, there were pieces of news in it that made me mad. I wanted to express my anger as clearly as possible, but I was unable to do much more than that. I certainly didn't have a theory, much less a comprehensive ideology. I didn't want to go beyond the limits of what I was sure of. Hence, I was considered unconstructive, irresolute, and a paltry moderate. Still, I don't think I am ready to compromise on the matters that make me mad: nationalism, colonialism, social injustice, and the absurdity of the modern State. But I also know that my political horizon is rather limited, if not narrow. I can't believe in radical and sudden changes any longer. Finally, the greatest political achievement I can conceive of today would be that we succeed in letting the younger generation grow up in peace. And may I insist that I am not a pacifist."

Nicola Chiaromonte

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CORRESPONDENCE

PAISAN

Sirs,

While reading Robert Warshow's analysis of *Paisan* (PR July 1948), I put myself into the position of a reader of news, and thus was enabled to think that Rossellini's picture must be an outstanding cultural event. Where else, except in a few rare examples over the past twenty years, can be found "certain images . . . that remain in one's consciousness with the particularity of real experience," where else does a scene "derive its power precisely from the fact that it is not cushioned in ideas," where else are characters "as real in ten seconds as they could be made in half an hour"? Even where the critic attacks the moviemaker, it is not a thoroughly believable attack—was not the great Griffith also sentimental, also weak in ideas, and, more often than we like to admit, also lacking in taste?

The critic induced a daydream: I felt that I would like to see this film, a good deal of which must be genuine and powerful. It must be *good,* to be worth Warshow's carefully considered writing and the editor's assignment of six pages to it.

Then the dream faded, and with it my interest in the "event." I recalled that I had already seen *Paisan,* and while seeing it and afterwards, I had thought this such a badly made film that it could be taken seriously only as an example of the corruption of the medium; that a critic would have to have the callous objectivity of anassistant in a sanitary engineer's laboratory to be able to analyze such a can of garbage, such a dreary collection of old bacon fat, orange peels, margarine wrappers, chicken bones, vegetable parings, sardine cans, and floor sweepings, without even the hope of finding a lost piece of jewelry. Cinematically, *Paisan* is shapeless and dull; the good the critic finds there is read into it, and does not proceed from it. Its "force," its "moments of tension," the statement that a certain scene's action "is always one moment ahead of the spectator's understanding" are not significant, I submit, simply because these characteristics can (and ought to be) explained on the ordinary level of *workmanship,* whereas your critic extends his search far beyond this ordinary level to "the fantasies of the eternally defeated," and into questions of "the whole meaning of the war." This is illegitimate until it is solidly established that Rossellini is a good enough artist to suggest these far-reaching questions himself, and that he is aesthetically equipped by the tools of his trade (his ability as a moviemaker) to take such a serious and deliberate course as "the rejection of ideas."

When I saw *Paisan,* it was made plain to me that the worst faults of *Open City* were magnified, as if the financial success of the director's first film had placed him beyond criticism, remembering that in Hollywood the crushing answer to all objection is a reference to box-office receipts. I found this "artist" lacking in any primary understanding of his medium. He is unable to establish visual continuity. His camera wanders senselessly from one vapid viewpoint to another. His shots either destroy his simple-minded points by needless complication (if Eisenstein used "composition," so also must this newest "maestro" use it, whether the scene needs it or not), or else they present themselves to the spectator as a tiresome procession of boring "eye-levels" so mediocre that it is impossible to say whether they should have been kept in or thrown away. His "tempo" is the tempo of a beginner on the piano whose listener waits in intolerable suspense while the difficult chord

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is fumbled for, the rhythm irrevocably lost, until at last the chord is struck . . . *inaccurately!*

How can such a bungler "transform" anything "into complete passivity," as Warshow states? Such a transformation, surely, would engage and test the supreme talent of the greatest artist; I must respond that your critic was searching for "passivity" and found it, while I, searching for a good movie, found nothing more than a bad one in this confused jumble of images. How can the scenes of Florentine street-fighting have "power" divorced from "ideas" (as if planned that way) when the fact of the matter is that some of these scenes were not re-enacted, but actual newsreels? Not knowing this while watching the film, I thought them uncommonly sloppy and unclear to have been made by a man of Rossellini's reputation. Here the director did not reject ideas, but included some footage that is inadequate to serve as the climax of an already badly muddled episode; the shape of the episode is not determined by Rossellini and his crew of improvising writers, but by the nature of a group of left-over shots that happened to be available and that the great man happened to admire because of their violence.

Perhaps we have stumbled upon a paradox, where a critic has found a film that is particularly good because it is particularly bad, or we might dismiss the whole affair with the bromide about there being no accounting for taste, yet I believe an explanation is possible, beginning with the premise that educated people habitually despise all movies as the products of an aesthetically inferior, mechanical amusement medium, incapable of being art, yet peculiarly valuable as a mirror of mass taste. Aesthetically, movies inspire horror; sociologically, they are a god-send. It has become traditional to look at films as one looks at The Radio or Comic Books, as expressions of popular feeling, and, following this tradition, Warshow goes to *Paisan* fully prepared to find evidence of "hopelessness," "self-abasement," "rejection of ideas," etc., in a film made in Occupied Italy. He should be congratulated for his keen sensitivity to these moods and his clear analysis of the evidence; unfortunately it has taken me some time to find out his purpose, and he himself has not admitted that he has eliminated qualified aesthetics from his essays on films.

Your critic is giving The Movies a bad name. As a happy moron once said of James Agee's reviews, "I'd rather read him than see the picture."

George Barbarow

Tucson, Arizona

REPLY

Sirs:

Since Mr. Barbarow attempts to explain my supposed errors as the product of a basic hostility to movies, I must say first that I do not despise movies, that I think most movies are works of art (good art or bad), and that I usually go to the movies not to make sociological discoveries but for pleasure, just as I read novels for pleasure. I also find movies (and novels) interesting as social phenomena.

Of the six episodes of *Paisan*, I thought one was excellent and two very good. I tried to convey some of the quality of these episodes as I experienced it, and to explain this quality in terms of whatever seemed relevant, including what Mr. Barbarow calls workmanship: the placement of the camera, the selection, arrangement, and use of objects, bodies, voices, movements, etc. But all my observations rested on the initial fact that I had found the episodes moving. Since Mr. Barbarow did not, these observations of course became meaningless to him, and would have remained meaningless no matter

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how fully I might have concentrated on questions of technique.

I then became interested in the fact that Rossellini's virtues seemed to be closely connected with certain considerable vices, and I tried to analyze this connection in terms of attitudes that I found expressed (both overtly and implicitly) in the film and that seemed characteristic of other Italian films as well and possibly of Italian intellectual life as a whole. (I found some confirmation of my observations, after I had seen *Paisan*, in Guido Piovene's article in *Horizon*.) This problem naturally led me beyond questions of technique, but not, I think, beyond the legitimate framework of art criticism: sentimentality and vulgarity in a work of art are aesthetic defects. It is not my fault that Mr. Barbarow finds my objections to the film not thoroughly believable; I thought them rather strong (I wrote of one episode that it is "so outrageously vulgar that it must surely be the product of a calculated dishonesty"). It is true that "the great Griffith" is "also sentimental, also weak in ideas, and . . . . also lacking in taste." I must speak of Griffith with some diffidence because I have never seen *The Birth of a Nation*, but, with that very important reservation, I should say that Griffith's genius as a moviemaker was combined with limitations of mind and sensibility that kept him from being a truly great artist. Here, I think, it is Mr. Barbarow who fails to respect the medium; if the films are an art among the other arts, then a great film artist must have something like the stature of a great novelist or a great dramatist, and Griffith is not to be excused for his sentimentality (or John Huston for his intellectual shallowness) because of his genius in "workmanship."

Robert Warshow

New York City

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ATONALITY AND OBSCURANTISM

Mr. René Leibowitz has honored my article "The Atonal Trail" (PR, May, 1948), with a reply printed in the August issue. Much as I dislike to enter into polemics with as dogmatic an obscurantist as Mr. Leibowitz, I feel that certain of his remarks need clarification.

I will confine my answer to his most important objections:

a) Mr. Leibowitz fails to understand my statement that "Stravinsky is concerned with the problem of musical time and its measurement." He should know that the term "musical time" applies to music as an instrument of time measurement, and of representation (in terms of sound structures) of time flow. Stravinsky, and some other contemporary composers are, I believe, concerned with this particular faculty (and function) of the art of music in a more conscious way than were, for example, the composers of the late nine-

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teenth century (who were concerned with the faculty of music of representing human emotions, or objects, or events). I did not say that this is Stravinsky's particular *originality*. I said it is Stravinsky's *concern*. And I said it as one would say of a steak house; "It is the particular concern of this restaurant to cook steaks." Or as one would say of the dodecatonalists; "It is the particular concern of these people to propagate a system of composition in which the twelve semi-tones of the chromatic scale can be used, and juxtaposed without reference to any root-tone and without any dependence upon the laws of acoustics." Of course, Mr. Leibowitz, the measurement of musical time, as any non-obscurantist musician would understand it, has to deal with much more than "the length and proportion of the various sections of a piece." Come, come, Mr. Leibowitz, you must know what musical time perception is. I mean, not Kantian time, but *chronos* which for a composer is, to all intents and purposes, a "thing which flows." The measurement of musical time has to deal with acute time perception, with rhythmical inventiveness, with the shaping of the tiniest melismatic cell, with the skillful juxtaposition of several time patterns (Do you follow me, Mr. Leibowitz? I said time patterns, not rhythmical patterns), and of course, with the most minute and precise proportions and relations between silence and sound, loud and soft, strong and weak. Don't you realize, Mr. Leibowitz, that if music

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is concerned with the measurement of time, the art lies in how to measure it. And I did not say that this is a *new* concern of music but I do say that composers have not always been conscious of it. Today Stravinsky and a few others are. Dodecatonalists, I assume from Mr. Leibowitz's letter, are excepted.

b) Mr. Leibowitz objects to my statement that "Stravinsky is concerned with the function of the interval." He finds that there is nothing original about such a concern and suggests that, "The only way to be concerned with it is to write music." Yet, parenthetically, he remarks that "Nobody has given greater care to the function of the interval than Schoenberg, the twelve-tone technique being entirely based on this consideration." Leaving aside the question of whether the twelve-tone technique is, or is not "entirely based" on interval function, Mr. Leibowitz, by such a statement, admits by inference that there may have been or are composers who do not give the function of the interval sufficient care and consideration.

I do not know whose leg Mr. Leibowitz is pulling. P.R. readers', or his own? He knows as well as I do the deplorable fact that a great deal of music is being written today with no serious attention to the function of the interval. So much is being composed (and, alas, performed) which shows no understanding of the acoustical implications of interval relations, and a nearly complete disregard of rational and artful interval structure of chords, of the relation and resolution of chords, and the interval leaps of a melodic outline. Composers' ears do not always fulfill their obligation to listen well, and with extreme care, to the function of the intervals he invents. Their "inner ears" have been much too often asses' ears. What I mean to say in speaking of Stravinsky's concern with interval function is that Stravinsky has an infinitely imaginative ear which approaches musical materials with great care and respect. He is able to discover most ingenious interval functions, and hence solve modulatory and other structural problems in a new way.

c) I said in my article that one feature of Stravinsky's art is to "juxtapose *in time*, several melodic lines." Mr. Leibowitz asks where else except in time is such a juxtaposition possible. He apparently objects to my italics of the words "in time." Yet they were intentional and necessary. They referred to two things.

1) Melodies are too often juxtaposed *on paper*,—and not in time, that is, not in audible time reality. It all looks well on paper, but sounds damn rotten. The worst examples of this kind of mechanical paper counterpoint (which is to the ears what sand is to the teeth) now comes from the mills of the Schoenberg epigones of which Mr. Leibowitz is one.

2) If music is a form of time perception and time representation, one melody may be so complete in itself as to embody one particular representation of one particular time perception. To juxtapose it to another melody (which may be quite another representation of another time perception) is to solve not only a complex problem of pitch counterpoint, but also of time counterpoint.

d) The remainder of Mr. Leibowitz's remarks or questions can be dealt with briefly.

1) *Rhythm.* Mr. Leibowitz does not understand my use of this term. He finds it equivocal and contradictory. He should know that the vocabulary of music criticism and music theory is unfortunately not a precise or scientific one. In many instances it borrows terms which have other meanings in other fields. Further, musical terms often carry more than one meaning. For example, the word rhythm may refer to the basic element of music; the element of

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time measurement. It may also be applied to the design of an entire piece of music,—a design which is the result of the fusion of harmony, time, and acoustical space. This is what I have called analogically the fourth dimension of music.

2) *Space.* Mr. Leibowitz wonders what music has to do with space. He is perhaps not so well acquainted with the laws of acoustics and their influence upon musical theory and aesthetics. Helmholtz's book on acoustics, and Hindemith's *Craft of Musical Composition* might be useful to him in this connection. I would also like to point out to him that music is a physical thing. And although music is an invention of the human mind, it is also a phenomenon that must be *heard* and *performed.* As such it is a spatial thing, and a thing in space.

3) *Linear harmony.* Mr. Leibowitz asks: "What is linear harmony (the definition of harmony being that it deals with chords)?" Here Mr. Leibowitz reveals his ignorance of the most elementary musical terms. Of course, linear, or horizontal, harmony refers to the function and relation of intervals in a melodic line. This definition can be found in harmony textbooks, and if Mr. Leibowitz neither knows nor understands it, he should stop writing about music.

As for Mr. Leibowitz's lament about the state of contemporary musical affairs, I presume that his "total engagement" in the cobwebs of twelve-tone dogma . . . . coupled with ignorance and arrogance, compels him to negate all contemporary music which does not conform to this system. This is an old pose of the propagandists of atonality, which by now has become thoroughly stale.

Nicolas Nabokov

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